

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

FROM UNEARTHING VALUES TO BUILDING EDUCATIONAL  
FOUNDATIONS:  
HOW THE VALUES OF EDUCATION SWANAGE WERE INFLUENTIAL IN  
FOUNDING THE SWANAGE SCHOOL

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degree of Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology

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*~My place is placeless, a trace of the traceless~*  
*Rumi*

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY  
ABSTRACT  
FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE

FROM UNEARTHING VALUES TO BUILDING EDUCATIONAL  
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The Purbeck Review of Schools, initiated by Dorset County Council in 2008, resulted in the closure of the middle school in Swanage, leaving the town bereft of secondary education by July 2013. A community-led group, Education Swanage, founded a new school in the town, which opened in September 2013 as a free school, with a human-scale ethos. Although there was controversy about free schools at the time, there is no research to date about how personal values influence the founding of such a school. This research answers the question how did values influence the founding of The Swanage School?

This inductive research was informed by literature on the conceptualization of 'values' and the 'sacred' and delimited by theoretical insights from practical theology, living theory and human-scale education. The action research strategy, set within a paradigm of praxis, addressed how values influenced action in founding the school. Semi-structured interviews, an online survey and a validation group were used to discover how values influenced practice.

The data revealed a variety of interpretations of the term 'values', which were most commonly alluded to as being central in guiding and informing everyday interaction in the world and relating to how humans respond to others whilst also being a reflection of personal identity. The research identified areas of practice where the interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic values was influential when operating in contradiction and congruence to affect change. Analysis of the findings enabled conclusions and propositions to be developed, which focused on how values influenced the process of moving from contradiction to congruence in order to enact change.

Values were a significant influence in the founding of The Swanage School. When values were contradicted they acted as standards of judgement and formed the basis of conversations which led to problems being solved and decisions being made. Concepts from the wider literature and the field of practical theology provided insight into how values can be defined and how their influence on action can be interpreted as an encounter with the sacred. The conclusion of this study and its contribution to knowledge is the explanation of how values influenced the founding of The Swanage School in the form of a living educational theory.

Key words: Values, sacred, influence, contradiction, intrinsic, extrinsic

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

BERA - British Educational Research Association  
COC - Curriculum Overview Committee  
DCC - Dorset County Council  
DfE - Department for Education  
DProf - Professional Doctorate  
EB - Education Brief  
EfA - Education Funding Agency  
ES - Education Swanage  
GCSE - General Certificate of Secondary Education  
HSEM - Human Scale Education Movement  
LA - Local Authority  
LSN - Local Schools Network  
NC - National Curriculum  
Ofsted - Office for Standards in Education  
RE - Religious Education  
STC - Swanage Town Council  
SVC - Sawston Village College  
TSS - The Swanage School  
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organisation  
URC - United Reformed Church



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## **THE BRIGHT FIELD**

**R. S. Thomas**

I have seen the sun break through  
to illuminate a small field  
for a while, and gone my way  
and forgotten it. But that was the pearl  
of great price, the one field that had  
treasure in it. I realize now  
that I must give all that I have  
to possess it. Life is not hurrying  
on to a receding future, nor hankering after  
an imagined past. It is the turning  
aside like Moses to the miracle  
of the lit bush, to a brightness  
that seemed as transitory as your youth  
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.

## **CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION**

### **Focus of research**

In September 2013, a new school opened in Swanage, Dorset, situated in a natural World Heritage site on the south coast of England. The founding of The Swanage School (TSS) followed four years of campaigning to save secondary education in the area, following a review of educational provision, led by Dorset County Council (DCC) that resulted in the closure of middle schools across the region. In response, TSS was created as a human-scale, 11-16 free school, founded by a community group, Education Swanage (ES). A 'human-scale' school is centred on the concept of the primacy of relationships, whereas a 'free' school is a state-funded school, independent of Local Authority (LA) control.

As a member of ES, I was privileged to be part of a process of significant educational change in the community in which I live. This process affected not just me and my colleagues, but the dynamism and vibrancy of the town itself and the educational experience of our children. At the heart of the project lay values, around which our lives and work rotated. Values formed the basis of the investigation, as I endeavoured to answer the question, how did they influence the founding of TSS? Answering this question has taken me on a deep journey, not only to 'unearth' or 'discover' how values were influential in founding a new community school, but also to reflect on how they interacted in the complexity of our lives, relationships and work.

My background as a teacher of religious education (RE) partly informed the approach to this research. Although I am not a practising member of a particular faith community, I see myself as a practical theologian as I use theology as a reflective lens through which to view the world and my interaction within it. Coupled with this, I am an educationalist; motivated by improving what I do in order to help young people learn. This research was inductive and delimited in scope; the sources that provided the boundaries of the methodological approach were derived from the field of practical theology, the principles of human-scale education and Whitehead and McNiff's (2006) living theory, a form of action research. Wider literature related to values and the sacred provided insight into the conceptualisation of these terms.

The free school policy was introduced by the coalition government in 2010 to enable proposer groups, such as ES, to found government-funded schools free of LA control. ES is a co-operative community group and a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. The 18 members represent a cross section of the local community who acted as the governing body in the pre-opening phase of the school. Throughout this thesis they shall remain anonymous. They functioned as four work streams; curriculum, communications, people, finance and premises. Individually they provided differing gifts which enabled the project to move forward; for example, included in the group is a journalist, a photographer, an actuary, a marketing manager, a change management expert, a lawyer, two teachers, a teaching assistant and an engineer. In late 2012 and early 2013 a head teacher and deputy were appointed as full-time employees; the first paid members of the team. By September 2013 there was a full complement of staff.

Whereas the research participants were all members of ES, I perceived myself as a practitioner and participant researcher who acted as both a ‘player’, a member of ES, and a ‘commentator’, a partisan interpreter of the findings (Ganzevoort, 2009, pp.10-11). My contribution to ES follows a long-term interest in education. As a child, I studied at Sawston Village College (SVC) in Cambridgeshire. Like TSS, it was the first school of its kind, in this case a rural community college, founded by 20th-Century educationalist Henry Morris. He envisioned community schools that would ‘have the virtue of being local to enhance the quality of actual life as it is lived from day to day’ (Morris, 1925). Whilst at SVC I visited Swanage as part of a geography fieldtrip, studying coastal erosion and the geology of The Purbeck Hills. In a twist of fate, 30 years on, I live in Swanage with my family. As a teacher with over 20 years of experience I felt honoured to be engaged in a project to create a local community school, just as Morris envisaged, despite my reservations about the controversial free school policy.

As a secondary school teacher, freelance educator, local parent and community member I had a deep sense of responsibility for the project. My role in ES was two-fold; Vice-Chair of governors and Chair of the curriculum committee. I was responsible for writing the Education Brief (EB) which presented the proposed school’s curriculum and organisation of learning to the Department for Education (DfE), in advance of the funding agreement being signed by the secretary of state for education. Furthermore, my

role enabled me to explore the research questions, as an insider, by investigating how the values of ES influenced our practices and indeed our lives.

### **Research question**

A research question can be difficult to form in new or under-explored areas (Andrews, 2003, p.45). My question was set within a new context that was in a state of flux. The progress of ES was dynamic and dependent on a highly complex timeline (Appendix Five), working towards the opening date of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013. Within the wider educational context the picture was also fluid; the National Curriculum (NC) was under review and the development of the new performance measure, the English Baccalaureate, was in its infancy (DfE, 2012). As a prefix to the main question I use a statement as a metaphorical device, ‘from unearthing values to building educational foundations’, which suggests that the investigation reflected the journey of transformation as the school was established; as the work developed, the influence of values was revealed. The word ‘unearthed’ is used in a poetic and metaphorical sense to represent the concept of discovery. The metaphorical nature of the statement is an important aspect of its meaning as metaphor is part of everyday life and is present ‘not just in language but in thought and action’ (Lakoff and Johnsen, 2003, p.4). Indeed, metaphor played a part in my research journey, as a device of ‘poetic imagination’ (p.4) to enable me to understand certain experiences in terms of another.

My purpose in asking the question was not to find an end point but a place to begin, within a living explanation of our work, which required us to change ourselves if we wanted to help others to become ‘participants in processes of change’ (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.137). Values were a significant part of the process of change in our work; they had influence, as compelling forces, on all our discussions and decisions. Therefore, this research is a living testimony to how values influenced the journey of ES, social transformation and the ongoing process of enabling action and change. It was against that background of educational and social change that my research question was devised: How were the values of Education Swanage influential in founding The Swanage School? The aim was facilitated through a process of reflection, to enable the influence of values to be ‘unearthed’. My key objectives were to explore the question through a methodological approach based on practical theology and living theory and to develop a conceptual framework that enabled me to explain how values

were influential. The term ‘influential’ is understood as a process of cause and effect, which happens when something compels action to take place. The methods used identified how values acted as forces of influence in regard to personal identity, relationships and social change. The term ‘values’ is explored in Chapter Three, with a specific focus on the work of Schwartz’s (1992) explanation of intrinsic (self transcendent) and extrinsic (self enhancement) values.

### **Context**

The research was set within the context of my work both as a teacher and a member of ES. It was undertaken between September 2011 and 2013 and involved analysis of data from semi-structured interviews, an online survey and a validation group.

As a result of this contextual setting the research was inductive. Although the wider political context touched on debate regarding the coalition government’s free school policy, the parameters were limited to the specific setting of Swanage and its location in the Isle of Purbeck. The research was conducted within a tight-knit community group, whose practice was specific to the geographical, social, economic and environmental characteristics of Swanage.

### **Explanatory principles that influenced the research**

#### **Human-scale education**

The ethos of TSS was grounded in human-scale principles; social justice, respect, democracy and sustainability, as defined by the Human Scale Education Movement (HSEM, 2012). Our work was particularly influenced by the director of the movement, James Wetz, who in his seminal work, ‘Urban Village Schools’ (2009), sets out his agenda for ‘putting relationships at the heart of secondary school organisation and design’ (2009). These principles were incorporated into the ES free school proposal to the DfE. However, although they were stated in the initial proposal and EB, they were not necessarily the same values and principles that actually guided the work of the group. Therefore, this research is not about how ES assumed the principles of an external body; in contrast, it is an exploration of the influence of our values, which were at times buried in contradiction, regarding how the school should be developed. On one level, members of the group did not have an agreed set of values, on another the way ES was perceived in the community was not always in accordance with the values we tried



to espouse. Furthermore, the national debate about free schools was, to some extent, at odds with the values that were at the heart of ES. Thus, at times, the project seemed to be swamped in contradiction and confusion; it was not transparent how values were working in practice. Therefore, the research represents an original explanation of how values influenced our work, in the context of such contradictions.

### **Practical theology**

The exploration of values is linked to a theological dimension that runs deep in my personal psyche. I am interested in theology as a means to speak about elements of life that induce a sense of spirituality, rather than in a more traditional way, whereby it is seen as ‘discourse about God’ (McGrath, 2011, p.102). In July 2013 I had the privilege of meeting Professor Ruud Ganzevoort at the Professional Doctorate summer school in York, which was a turning point in my research journey. He suggests that our lives centre on a dimension which he defines as sacred; ‘a centre around which one’s life gravitates and a presence that evokes awe and passion’ (2009, p.3). To him, the sacred is an encounter with something that transcends everyday life, whilst religion is concerned with the ‘transcending patterns of action and meaning embedded in and contributing to the relation with the sacred’ (p.3). Theology is the second order academic study of such encounters with religion. Following the summer school I wrote to Prof. Ganzevoort to seek his views on the validity of linking my work on the influence of values to these definitions of the sacred and religion; he said ‘I think it can certainly make sense to interpret (core) values as having to do with the sacred’ (Email Correspondence, Appendix One). Engagement with Ganzevoort’s thinking provided helpful definitions for elusive theological terms in relation to my research. This provided a ‘place’ from which I could ‘trace’ a sacred thread through my work.

Values are not exclusively religious in relation to traditional belief, nor are they entirely secular and relative to each individual. Despite the many interpretations that can be placed on their meaning, from my perspective they have a sacred dimension in that we centre our lives around them as if, metaphorically speaking, they are forces of gravity that compel us to act. That is not to say that everything of value is sacred, for example, I value a tidy kitchen but it is not sacred to me. On the other hand, honesty in relationships evokes the kind of encounter that Ganzevoort refers to and is part of what

my life gravitates towards; it is the influence of these kinds of values that this investigation focuses on.

To create a structured conceptual framework, I used insights from practical theology. In a sense my work is 'religious', according to Ganzevoort's definition, in that it attempts to identify patterns of how values act, in a transcendent way, outside of material existence, and in an immanent way, as they contribute to meaning embedded in the world, through our actions. However, this is not a traditionally religious exploration, but rather a personal journey of discovery along a spiritual path. I cannot claim that my colleagues in ES are on the same quest, yet by exploring the influence of values, we have journeyed together in a collaborative way to develop an understanding of these 'gravitational forces' that have been at the centre of our lives and work in the community, evoking awe and passion in our actions. Therefore, I can justify using my practical theological perspective to examine not only the influence of values but also my self-identity and collaborative interaction with others, as we worked together to make our dreams of a school become a reality.

In this study I have used such insight to interpret how ES was influenced by values as we changed our little part of the world. To some extent this is a narrative account, written within a framework of a 'living educational theory' (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006). It is an explanation of the principles that affected our work; how values influenced learning, meaning, action and reflection in the context of our everyday lives and ambitions. Conversely, it is also an explanation of how our everyday lives and ambitions affected our values.

Therefore, practical theology provided definition; shaping elements of the conceptual framework and identifying methods of reflection to illuminate how values were influential in practice. Heitink (1999) suggests that practical theology can be divided into three interrelated perspectives; understanding, the hermeneutical perspective, explanation, the empirical perspective, and change, the strategic perspective that orients action toward intentional outcomes (Van Gelder, 2002, p.616). This resonates with the process of developing a living theory, which involves interpretation, explanation and action within the context of the work of ES and through my role as the researcher.

## **Living theory**

The work of ES was a continual cycle of action reflection, from choosing a logo and uniform to making hard decisions about the shape of the curriculum, plus writing and reviewing a multitude of school policies. The approach to the research needed to correspond to the process of founding the school; it needed to be reflexive, enabling relationships to be established between cause and effect. Living theory, devised by Jack Whitehead in the 1970s and published in collaboration with Jean McNiff in 2006, was an appropriate approach to explain educational influences in learning. Whitehead and McNiff (2006, p.26) state that ‘when you claim that you have a theory, you are making a claim to knowledge’. In stating a living theory a knowledge claim is being made to explain ‘why things are the way they are’ (p.26). In this context a theory is an explanation of a claim to knowledge. However, it is not possible merely to develop an explanation, it must be tested against the evidence base, and people other than the researcher need to say that it is ‘reasonable grounds for the validity of that theory’ (p.26). Hence, this thesis acts as a contribution to theory; an explanation of how values influenced action in founding The Swanage School, which must be tested for validity by others.

A living theory validates a claim to knowledge against appropriate standards of judgement such as values. Individuals and groups can generate their own explanation of educational influences through analysis of their learning, relationships with others and social transformations they are involved in. Living theory emerges through methodological inventiveness whereby the story itself becomes the explanation of educational influence. In this sense it allows for influences from other methodologies, for example a narrative approach, whereby the story is not only propositional but transformative (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.117). The stories accumulated within a living theory can lead to ‘episodes of thinking, which in turn lead to new insights that inform new episodes of practice’ (p.117). Within these stories Whitehead and McNiff claim that values act as standards of judgement and are epistemological and ontological in nature (pp.86-87). The former emerge when people generate their own knowledge, linked to rationality (knowing), and the latter when they create a flow of energy that gives meaning and purpose to life (being). These ‘episodes of thinking’ and ‘flows of energy’ resonate with Ganzevoort’s ‘patterns of meaning’ in respect of his definition of religion.

Choosing living theory and practical theology as explanatory principles that influenced my conceptual framework enabled me to identify and reflect on the influence of values. The outcome was intended to illuminate how this influence led to social transformation, in this case founding the school.

### **Structure of thesis**

The structure is chronological, as the title suggests, weaving its way from ‘unearthing’ values to ‘building’ the foundations of the school. An intellectual question is asked within my living theory methodology; how did members of ES live in accordance with their values as they progressed on a learning journey together? It was a journey of social transformation ‘by a community, for a community, in one of England’s finest natural environments’ (Education Swanage, mission statement, 2012). In providing a community school where all are learners, ES aimed to live in accordance with their values rather than in contradiction to them. Although the story is told through the lens of ES I hope that the outcome will permeate the approach of other school groups and educational practitioners by testing propositions presented in the penultimate chapter.

The research was conducted as part of a Professional Doctorate programme (DProf) and therefore reflected on practice and theory. The DProf focuses on practitioners making a contribution to best practice as a ‘researching professional’ rather than a ‘professional researcher’ (Bennett and Graham, 2008, p.33). This was an iterative process that drew on theory in order to reflect on, inform and improve practice. In turn the outcomes are intended to contribute to theoretical insights into living educational practice. The new theory developed is the reflective journey that asked; how can practice be improved by reflecting on the influence of values?

The structure of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter Two explains the context of my professional values as a teacher and introduces the background to the establishment of ES in proposing the school in Swanage.

Chapter Three explores the meaning and understanding of values, the field of practical theology and the conceptualisation of the sacred.

Chapter Four explains the methodology, research strategy, design and conceptual framework. This section also examines living theory as the basis for the approach, incorporating practical theology as a dialogue partner.

Chapter Five is an outline and critique of the data collection methods in terms of semi-structured interviews, an online survey and use of a validation group.

Chapter Six synthesises the main findings from the research data. The chapter is descriptive as it summarises each stage of the two-year data-collection process. The interviews were analysed to produce themes, which formed the basis of the subsequent survey. The survey results are explored question by question, and coded into themes. The final element of the data collection took the form of a validation group, who were presented with a summary of the research journey at the interpretive discussion stage. The chapter concludes with a summary of the validation group meeting, based on new themes that emerged from the discussion. The purpose of the validation group was to affirm or challenge the research journey I described so that conceptual conclusions could be made that were consistent with the experience of the participants.

Chapter Seven is an interpretive synthesis and analysis of the findings and a discussion of how the values were perceived to be influential. The aim was to discover synergy between the findings of the research, the affirmation of the validation group and the emerging practices of ES as it prepared to open the school. This chapter is an interpretive discussion which demonstrates the internal theoretical consistency of the research (Trafford and Leshem, 2008, p.172). The discussion explores how values acted as standards of judgement; explanatory principles that influenced change, particularly in light of the practical interplay between the themes of contradiction, compromise and congruence.

Chapter Eight discusses the conceptual conclusions (Trafford and Leshem, 2008, p.49) in relation to the founding of TSS and the work of ES as a living educational theory. These conclusions are discussed in relation to the fields of conceptual enquiry that informed the research from the beginning; practical theology, living theory and human-scale education. The chapter also establishes propositions for others to test.

Chapter Nine summarises the research journey, answers the research question and presents the final conclusions and reflections. This chapter also explains the potential for post-doctoral work, which has emerged from this research.

**‘Tracing the Sacred’ – an innovative way to conduct our lives**

Ganzevoort states that it is possible to ‘trace the sacred’ through practical theological research. He claims this can be done through identifying a particular ‘fork in the road’ (2009). The practical theological ‘trace’ explained in this work is designed to enable the reader to travel along a path and be affected by what is encountered on the journey. This is a form of ‘itinerant scholarship’ (Ganzevoort, 2009, p.5); a written explanation of inventive and purposeful ways in which I and ES decided to live our lives. Whereas Ganzevoort describes this approach as ‘*telos*’, travelling with transformation in mind, Whitehead and McNiff (2006, p.3) suggest that such action research concerns ‘finding innovative ways of conducting our lives and telling our stories in a way that other people can learn’. The purpose (*telos*) of the research is ‘traced’ through to the conclusion of this thesis which explains that new theory posited reflects and explains the lived and influential values of ES.

The outcome of this research involved analysis of the way values interacted and influenced the work of ES in founding the school. I cannot generalise from inductive research although it is possible that the propositions could be tested, for example, by other free school proposer groups. However, this journey will not stop at the end of this thesis; there will be a dynamic and evolving process of development for myself, members of ES and staff at TSS. In effect, it is only a beginning. Therefore, within the boundaries of the research this is an account of the journey so far and an explanation of how values were influential in building future provision of education in the town of Swanage.

I hope that the manner in which our values, as influential standards of judgement, are lived out in the telling of this story is a testimony to the authenticity of the journey so that other people can learn from it.

## **CHAPTER TWO – CONTEXT**

### **Introduction**

Chapter Two outlines my practice as an educationalist in relation to my rationale and motivation for the research project. It also explains the journey of ES from the initiation of the group to the proposal for the school. It is important to explain the context of the story before an understanding can be developed of the influence of values. The project was established on the basis of a complex and dynamic situation in which there were many ‘players’. The inherent values that interacted within this context provided the backdrop to a situation whereby individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds and motivations came together to work towards a communal cause. The telling of the story is a delicate balance between respect for the individual and unveiling the ways in which the group acted together for the sake of a ‘greater good’. Paver (2006, p.25) suggests that ‘the lived experience of one’s life is shaped by personal and community relationships, religious tradition, culture, politics, work, leisure time and all the multiplicity of feelings and thoughts that go to make the very fabric of a human being’. Hence, the ‘fabric’ of our lived experience has been outlined to set the research in context.

### **A ‘fine balance’ - perspectives on qualitative research**

My story as a teacher and the story of ES as a proposer group serve to illustrate how values can, on reflection, influence change within the context of contradiction. The purpose of telling these stories, through qualitative research, is to ‘unearth’ the ways in which values were ‘dug up’ in order to improve practice and influence social transformation. However, excavating the story required competence in qualitative research skills.

The relationship between living in accordance with and in contradiction to one’s values is a ‘fine balance’. A contradiction is defined in logical thinking as two propositions that are incompatible. However, without contradiction it can be argued that progress would not occur; ‘without contraries there is no progression’ (Blake, 2012, p.3). Dialectical reasoning, which is grounded in contradiction, has shaped philosophy since the time of Plato and the Socratic Dialogues (Plato, 2009). Subsequently, Engels developed three laws of dialectical thought from Hegel, one of which concerned the identity and conflict of opposites (Corney, 1972). The Hegelian and Marxist systems synthesise dialectical

thought to focus on the concept of harmony through polarisation; ‘the opposing forces offset each other in providing for dynamic development’ (McNiff, 2002, p.28).

Individuals and groups find ways in which they can improve what they do through dialectical reflection, as living in contradiction results in change and social action. Thus the purpose of the research is to explore the ways in which balance was found, by exploring the influence of values within contradictions within ES, in order for progress to be made.

Corben and Strauss (2008, p.4) state that qualitative research involves developing sensitivity, empathy, carefulness, respect and honesty. These qualities act as measures in the way I tell this story, paying respect to ‘thick description’ (Ryle, 1971, p.487; Geertz, 1973, p.6) and the relationship between my journey and the one I share with ES. The narrative is integrated with the development of educational theory as I explain how values influenced social transformation. The explanation becomes the theory, a contribution to knowledge, to be shared with other educational practitioner communities.

However, a narrative approach is open to criticism for subjectivism and focusing on the vested interests of the author (Ganzevoort, 2011, p.222). Whilst this is a valid criticism, narrative can also highlight vested interests and subjectivity in order for such issues to be critiqued. Although a narrative approach can be too verbal and limited to power struggles of a very specific group, this is exactly what participatory action research deals with. For example, West (1989) suggests that ‘intellectual activity should foster methods for examining everyday life’ and Conde-Frazier (2011, p.235) explains that ‘a more creative democracy is encouraged through critical reflection and social action’. Therefore a narrative approach is hermeneutical; it interprets the meaning people give to their everyday lives. The relationship between the narrative approach and practical theology provided a framework from which to explore and interpret the meaning of my life and the lives of members of ES, within the context of the school project, despite the inherent subjectivity.

Therefore, the style of the next section is narrative. Such an approach ‘locates experience in time and place’ and focuses on the particular (Bruner, 1986, p.13). It is important for me to locate this narrative within the particular needs of myself as a



teacher and the educational needs of the community in which I live. This is not a scientific, positivistic piece of work, but an account that is relative, subjective and local. As a key influence in my narrative, practical theology ‘speaks to me’ in order that I may understand and find meaning in life. Ganzevoort cites several scholars (Crites, Gerkin and Ricœur) who discuss the narrative quality of experience as a means to deepen understanding (Ganzevoort, 2011, p.214ff). Gerkin (1973, p.11) says it is as if we are ‘living human documents’ whereby meaning can be found behind, within and in front of the text of our lives. Therefore it is appropriate to use narrative to explain how influences on my learning led me to a re-evaluate my work as a teacher, in order that I might live more in accord with my educational values. Inevitably my story is linked to the formation of ES and the journey we shared was important in explaining how values acted as explanatory principles in building the foundations of the new free school in Swanage.

### **My story as an extended educational practitioner**

Values are at the heart of both stories, acting as benchmarks for decision making. Internally I struggled with aligning my values to my professional life, whereas in the context of ES we grappled with contentious issues involved in the setting up of a free school. On one level I presented a competent persona as a teacher, yet struggled within myself in relation to living in accordance with my values. Similarly, ES presented a united front externally, yet internally we wrestled with relationships, group dynamics, workload and process. This research enabled me to reflect on my personal values; the process has helped me re-align my professional life with the principles I hold as an educational practitioner. Likewise, throughout the lifespan of this research, ES developed their work to embrace values that shaped and guided the founding of the school.

Teachers are ‘extended professionals’ (Baumfield, 2012, p.207) who need to recognise their role as practitioners in a learning context. Baumfield says that teachers have a critical but underestimated role in creating theory from their practices in the classroom. I perceive myself as an ‘extended practitioner’ as I want to learn how to improve my educational practice by living in accordance with my values and influencing practice by developing theory. I cannot be the practitioner I would like to be whilst living in contradiction (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.25). However, by discovering and

exploring my professional values whilst reflecting on contradiction, I hope to improve my practice, influence positive change in the practice of others and activate social transformation.

### **Poetic influences**

A poem was sent to me anonymously in the summer of 2006. R.S. Thomas's 'The Bright Field' (1975) arrived at a critical moment in my life, as I considered leaving the conventional classroom after almost 20 years as a secondary school teacher. The poem helped me to reflect on my values as I considered how I could improve what I was doing in my professional life. 'The Bright Field' became a metaphorical aide to reflection on my professional values as I grappled with how I could enable young people to be independent and take responsibility for themselves in a culture that favours targets over aspirations and 'spoon-fed' learning in preference to conceptual independent inquiry. Poetic license enabled me not to 'hurry on to a receding future, nor hanker after an imagined past' (Thomas, 1975), as in the poem, but to narrate my story, as 'retrospection on the past and anticipation of the future', as a means of interpreting the present (Ganzevoort, 2011, p.220).

Poetry and narrative are shown to be valuable tools for presenting people's 'lived experiences of complex existential principles and processes' (Furman, 2007, p.1). Analysis of 'The Bright Field' enabled me to express living values that emerged through reflection on my professional journey, from the classroom to educational freelance work. Hirschfield (1997, p.vii) asserts that 'poetry has the capacity to clarify and magnify existence', 'each time we enter its word woven and musical invocation, we give ourselves over to a different mode of knowing: to poetry's knowing, and to the increase of existence it brings, unlike any other'.

The words of 'The Bright Field' weave a theme of light as Thomas begins the poem, 'I have seen the sun break through to *illuminate* a small field'. He ends with, 'it is the turning aside like Moses to the miracle of the *lit* bush, to a *brightness* that seemed as transitory as your youth once, but is the eternity that awaits you'. This theme of light is an important metaphor. My Welsh grandfather, another poetic Thomas, claimed a 'golden thread' weaves through our lives like a light for us to follow. In his unpublished autobiography, 'In Their Beginning Was My End' he reflects on his Christian faith,

‘looking back over my long life I can follow a golden thread that I followed or maybe that followed me and I have to confess that in the end it led me out of darkness into his most marvelous light’. It is this ‘light’ that I want to accord with in my professional and personal life.

To my grandfather, this thread was a consciousness that there is more to life than meets the eye, a hidden treasure, if only we can discover it. Thomas’s poem is, in essence, the literary expression of my grandfather’s golden thread. As a teacher my key value is that young people should be enabled to discover their treasure, which is often buried and needs ‘illuminating’, in order for a ‘break through’ to be made. Rather than ‘hurrying onto a receding future’ or ‘hankering after an imagined past’ it is the task of a good teacher to inspire young people to ‘turn aside...to a brightness’. Therefore, the aim of my work as a teacher is to enable young people to find their own treasure, whatever that might be.

R.S. Thomas alludes to the New Testament parables, the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price (The Bible, Matthew. 13: 44-45). He states, ‘but that was the pearl of great price, the one field that had treasure in it’. The pearl represents a quality that all young people have, the hidden ‘treasure’ waiting to be discovered. Thomas’s sense of urgency suggests that this treasure should be sought so that we might ‘possess it’. There are strong analogies here to teaching, the idea of aspirations and ambition being a highly sought after treasure, all too often buried beneath bureaucracy, apathy and complacency. On the other hand, whereas the pearl, or treasure, in the biblical context relates to the kingdom of heaven, in the educational context it symbolises creating ‘heaven on earth’ (Veling, 2005). This treasure, once ‘unearthed’ and activated ‘on earth’, can illuminate the rest of a young person’s life. Rather than having ‘gone on our way and forgotten’ we need to realise that the field with the treasure is right in front of us, waiting to be exposed to the light. For these reasons the poem opens this thesis as a metaphorical explanation of my research journey.

### **Theology as a critical tool**

The connections between Thomas’s poem and theology are strong and had a significant impact on my reflection on values. The approach I took was reflective and reflexive; in order to improve practice educationalists must reflect on their values, which in turn

effects change in practice. Therefore, because theology is a significant influence on me, theological reflection became a 'critical friend' in addressing how my practice and the practices of ES could be dynamic and transformative in improving what we do.

Theological literature investigated in Stage One (Appendices Two–Four) led to analysis of two academics, Veling (1996; 2005) and Groome (1991; 2002), Catholic theologians in Australia and the USA respectively. Critical engagement with their work and reflection on my personal story developed dialectic between theory and practice. Analysis of the work of Veling and Groome enabled me to identify values relevant to my work as a teacher and to the work of ES, for example; the primacy of relationships, the importance of inclusion and the significance of authentic conversation. From my perspective, these values are important standards of judgement in an educational context.

However, in Paper Three (Appendix Four) I stated that although theology is a useful tool for reflection there is also an assumption I am uncomfortable with, that those dealing with practical theology have a faith perspective, usually of a Christian nature (Swinton and Mowatt, 2006; Cameron et. al., 2010). Engagement with Ganzevoort's (2009) work was helpful in this respect as it enabled me to construct a methodological path that embraced my agnostic, yet spiritual, theological perspective. Therefore, my approach was to develop a model derived from reflection rather than from the confines of assumed Christian values. The link to Christianity was important, however, it did not prescribe the content of the analysis. My role as a practical theologian, educational practitioner and qualitative researcher was methodological, to ensure that theory and practice were held together in a dialectical tension, in a critical conversation, 'with each feeding into and off the other; each constantly challenging, enhancing and clarifying the other' (Swinton and Mowatt, 2006, p.82). As Bennett and Graham (2008, p.37) suggest, candidates for the DProf in Practical Theology need not necessarily have a faith commitment, but they should be 'interested in the role of religion, theology and ethics'. Therefore my discomfort with a faith perspective is countered by my interest in linking practical theology to action-guiding research in an educational setting.

Theological and educational reflection grapples with complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty and enables the researcher to ask probing questions. Whitehead and McNiff

(2006, p.37) state that ‘many schools actively teach people to think in limited and limiting ways, according to the metaphors of empty, bounded spaces that are assumed to be there, waiting to be filled’. On the contrary, education must be concerned with the ability to question and use metaphor imaginatively, to actively enquire and to expand the horizons of the learners (p.45). ‘Expanding Horizons’ became the strapline for TSS and as an educational practitioner theology ‘extended’ the outlook on my horizon, as an appropriate partner in unearthing the influence of values, as I sought to excavate and evaluate the sources and norms of practice and the ‘values and visions thereby disclosed’ (Graham, 2002, p.204).

### **From a cynical turn to ‘values and visions disclosed’**

The sources and norms of my values are heavily influenced by my Christian upbringing. My parents and grandparents were central in developing a strong sense of vision in terms of social justice. As a teenager I attended a United Reformed Church (URC), taking an active part in youth activities in the early 1980s, including conservation work in Germany and visiting India as part of a cultural education programme. The values with which I identified led me to promote concepts such as peace and equality, for example by becoming a vegetarian, a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and a feminist. However, a ‘critical incident’ resulted in a crisis of faith, self esteem and personal identity and although it is not relevant to discuss that narrative here, suffice it to say I embarked on my undergraduate studies a theological cynic. I studied Theology and Religious Studies at Manchester University from 1985-1988. Through a combination of learning about ‘world religions’ and a rising sense of scepticism with Christianity, I lost my personal faith altogether but maintained a sense of the value system that I ascribed to as a practising Christian. My ‘cynical turn’ led to me training as a teacher, rather than pursuing a vocation in the church. I became a secondary religious education teacher in 1989 and have spent most of my career working in state schools in Dorset.

However, the church did not have a monopoly on developing my cynical side. As a teacher I became increasingly disillusioned with the education system. By 2004 it was the norm for me to ‘deliver’ learning to classes of up to 30 children in an hour-long lesson each week. For a full-time teacher this meant up to 20 groups of students on the ‘conveyor belt’ of learning, equating to 600 students being ‘taught’ in a week. It has

become the norm in secondary schools to teach an RE GCSE in Philosophy and Religious Ethics, the popularity of which is dependent on the relationship between religion and contemporary issues, such as abortion and euthanasia. Between 2004 and 2009 I taught the course at a large comprehensive school in Dorset where students were set by ability for RE due to its timetable dependency with English. I taught several GCSE groups on a part-time basis whilst also becoming Lead Teacher for Dorset for Post-16 RE. Although I enjoyed my experiences in the classroom I never felt that I successfully crafted my professional practice to a skilled enough level. This was not through want of trying but was, to a large extent, due to the way in which schools managed how students learn.

### **A vignette from the classroom**

My experiences in the classroom led me to question my practice as a teacher and how I could improve what I do. I felt that at the root of the problem, my values were often being contradicted. For example, I believe in equality, yet students were set by ability based on 'value-added' data from students' prior attainment. The 'target-driven' culture, where academic achievement is the only measure of success, was not a comfortable place for me to be. Thursday afternoons became a particularly negative experience as each week I failed to engage my class. I was 'teaching' RE, to the 'bottom set', a group of 21 disaffected youngsters whose targets in all subjects fell short of the benchmark of five A\*-C grades at GCSE. These students were expected to sit the GCSE short course even though their target grades were at the bottom of the achievement ladder and their aspirations for life were low. The expectations of the school were unrealistic as the students' motivation was lacking. Furthermore, the likelihood of the class conforming in terms of behaviour was improbable as they could see little benefit in being compliant. The content of the course was relevant, dealing with relationships, coping with the 'big questions' of life, however, the issue for me as a teacher was, how can success be 'measured' in terms of achievement when students are trying to answer such questions from a negative starting point?

Regardless of the impossibility of the tasks the students and I battled through the school year. Yet on a weekly basis I felt that our values were being contradicted, if not violated. One day, having gone through the process of 'come in, sit down and be quiet' a student raised his hand. Slightly surprised by the unusual compliance to the rules of

the classroom, I took the question, 'what are we learning today, Miss?' 'Human rights' I answered. There was a stony silence as the student and I realised the irony; these young people had few rights themselves in terms of freedom and choice within school. The true value of education, in teaching children to think for themselves and to be responsible for their own actions, seemed completely lost in this target-driven, sterile context. This was the sort of contradiction I lived with as a teacher on a daily basis, but despite that, I did not have the urgency to leave the classroom behind; complacency and contradiction seemed compatible when a mortgage needed paying and there was a family to feed.

The first glimmer of hope came in the form of one activity the class really enjoyed, watching DVDs. I decided a change of tactic was required, in view of the fact they would undoubtedly fail the examination, I hoped they would be inspired to raise the stakes with other areas of study and in their personal lives. I undertook a series of lessons based on the film, *The Freedom Writers Diary*, which tells the true story of Erin Gruwell and her class at Woodrow Wilson High School in California (1999). Gruwell decided to change her teaching methods on noticing that one of her students had drawn a racist image during one of her lessons. Discovering the class had not heard of the Holocaust, Gruwell embarked on a teaching programme centred on the *Diary of Anne Frank* and engaged the learners in writing diaries of their own.

My class, this disaffected group of uninspired young people, suddenly became engaged in the story. They related to the lives of the young people who had an uncertain future. They related to the academic isolation within the school structure that labelled students as 'low ability' and they even seemed to relate to the teacher who was desperately trying to empower the young learners to turn their lives around. My class wrote letters to Gruwell, and all of a sudden 'I saw the sun break through' (Thomas, 1975). These young people acted as a catalyst for change for me as I considered my role as a practitioner in a context where I felt my values were constantly undermined. Despite the temporary breakthrough the sun did not appear very often and the grey that dominated was a cloud that appeared not to have a silver lining for those particular individuals, but as a teacher, I realised that I wanted to stop living in contradiction. I finally decided to step outside the conventional classroom in 2009 to found and coordinate freelance projects inspired by 'The Bright Field' poem. Between 2009 and

2011 I established three projects, SHINE, Positively MAD and Peacethread (Peacethread, 2012). SHINE was a motivational course for sixth form students which I delivered at a local outdoor education centre. The course involved team work, problem solving and managing challenges for post-16 students from Aim Higher<sup>1</sup> target schools.

Image removed to protect personal identity.

Figure 2.1 SHINE

Positively MAD (Making a Difference) was a course that I delivered to children with sessions focused on raising aspirations by considering approaches to diet, exercise and sleep.

Image removed to protect personal identity.

Figure 2.2 Positively MAD

The final project, Peacethread, was delivered as an annual event over three years. It was an inter-faith project ‘threading’ together young people, faith and peace (Appendix Two, p.5). It created opportunities and spaces for young people to enter into dialogue with each other and representatives from inter-faith groups on contemporary issues or

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<sup>1</sup> Aim Higher was a government initiative that encouraged students from disadvantaged backgrounds to attend university or continue in further education.



themes relating to peace. The teaching and learning ethos of Peacethread was based around a cooperative pedagogy as students were not merely recipients in the learning process but were encouraged to participate in the Peacethread project as equal partners who were able to reflect, contribute and act on issues being considered.

Image removed to protect personal identity.

Figure 2.3 Peacethread

Initiating these projects enabled me to live in accordance with values that I believe to be at the heart of good education. Developing this work enabled me to hold in balance values such as the importance of relationship, inclusion, freedom and the primacy of authentic conversation. It also re-engaged me with theology as I met faith practitioners from different religions who were inspiring, motivational and open-minded.



Figure 2.4 Peacethread artwork

As Peacethread and my liberation from conventional teaching developed, so did the educational struggle in Swanage. The shift in focus to the story of ES reveals a synergy between my desire to live according to my values and the desire of members of ES to create a school where relationships were at the heart of learning, and the school was at the heart of the community. As I worked towards improving my practice as an extended

practitioner, ES worked as a community of practitioners, towards creating a school of ‘extended learners’.

### **The story of Education Swanage**



Figure 2.5 Swanage deserves a secondary school protest march 24th November 2009

It is important to outline the ‘story of ES’ and the timeline of the project (see Appendix Five), in order to explain the rationale of ES in proposing the school. The story begins with the Purbeck Review of Schools, a consultation process organised by DCC to find a solution to the perceived problem of surplus places at Purbeck Upper School, Wareham, ten miles North West of Swanage. Education officers proposed ‘for there to be a two-tier pattern of provision; schools would operate as primary or secondary schools’ (Community Overview Committee Report, Dorset for You, 2012). Public consultation took place during the period January to February 2009 in order to seek stakeholder’s views on the proposal. The objective was to close middle schools in Bovington, Wareham, Sandford and Swanage and rationalise the primary sector by reducing the number of first schools as they were reorganised into primaries. Closure of Swanage Middle School would mean that children would transfer out of the town for schooling at the age of 11, instead of 13.

The consultation acted as a catalyst for the formation of ES, who, by the summer of 2009, had formed as a small community group that opposed the reorganisation of schools on educational, social, economic and environmental grounds. This diverse and disparate faction of parents, school governors, teachers, teaching assistants and interested members of the community began a campaign with the sole aim of opposing the council’s plans in order to retain secondary education in Swanage.

During the consultation council education officers published papers that were made available to all stakeholders in the Purbeck pyramid.<sup>2</sup> A number of key factors were stated as needing to be taken into account by consultees. First, the officers established that there was a presumption against the closure of rural schools. The consultation paper stated, ‘the government recognises the importance of local schools to their community’ (Dorset for You, consultation documents, 2012). Second, it was seen as critical that there would be secondary provision of high quality in the area that would be able to offer the enhanced National Curriculum entitlement for this age range. Finally, that schools ‘will need to widen their extended services to serve the local community both before and after the school day’ (Future School Provision in Purbeck Area, Dorset for You, 2012).

These three factors were a DCC ‘own goal’ as their rationale did not on the face of it support closing local schools; ES made good use of this flawed thinking in tabling an objection to the review process. Whereas the education officers claimed it was important for rural communities to have high quality provision for education, with extended services supported by local communities, ES believed that by closing schools in Swanage and the surrounding villages the officers contradicted their aim of providing high quality educational provision for all children and young people, locally. ES did not accept that a school ten miles away from Swanage was ‘local’.

However, by June 2009, DCC education officers reported to Cabinet and requested that following the initial consultation they approve an ‘in principle’ decision to change to a two-tier system of schooling on the grounds that ‘this will remove the significant majority of the surplus places and ensure a viable and sustainable school system across the Purbeck area’ (Dorset for You, COC report, June 2012). As a result, the first meeting of ES was held on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2009, to discuss the case for maintaining secondary education in Swanage based on numbers of children and the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the town. It was decided that the best course of action was to propose the option of a satellite of the Purbeck School in Swanage so that

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<sup>2</sup> A pyramid of schools includes all primary and secondary educational provision within a specific catchment area. The Purbeck pyramid included all first schools, middle schools and The Purbeck Upper School, all of which were located on the Isle of Purbeck. The secondary school is considered to be at the top of the pyramid with all of the other schools ‘feeding’ into it.

there could be local educational provision offering a broad and balanced curriculum under LA control.

ES initially proposed a twin campus option, with sites in Wareham and Swanage. The proposal stated that a town the size of Swanage (population 10,000), with approximately 600 11-16 year olds, should be properly equipped to educate its children locally and not be obliged to transport them daily to Wareham. ES argued that local secondary provision would remove the need for a fleet of buses travelling up the narrow and congested A351 through Corfe Castle on a 20-mile round-trip and would support DCC's own policies on improving sustainable transport. There would also be positive implications for children's health and well-being, levels of obesity and access to opportunities for after-school sport, clubs and activities.

Furthermore, ES proposed that a secondary school in Swanage would maintain the appeal of the town to young families. We argued that the loss of all educational facilities in Swanage beyond age eleven would fundamentally undermine the long-term prospects for the town and lead to a loss of young families from the area. Moreover, the lack of secondary provision would be a major disincentive for families and young people considering moving to Swanage. The lack of young people entering the local workforce, undermining both local businesses and essential services, would exacerbate the already ageing demographic profile of the town. Additionally we believed that a secondary school in the town would be more accessible to parents, enabling them to play a full and active part in their child's education.

ES began working with James Wetz, from HSEM, to ensure the vision for the school was realistic and supported by evidence from examples of small and federated schools in Dorset and the UK. ES believed a twin campus secondary school could offer shared leadership, governance, curriculum and timetabling with 11-16 learning centres in Swanage and Wareham, feeding into a combined 6th Form centre. This model would have the advantage of being environmentally sustainable whilst encouraging children to respect their community. The development of a local campus would help ensure the maintenance of Swanage's appeal to families, economic viability and renewed collaboration with outside agencies.

According to DCC figures the population and demographic trends for Swanage and the nearby village of Langton, would mean that there would be 720 11-16 year olds in 2014, furthermore the population of young people in the area was not expected to fall much below this (Appendix Six). Allowing for a percentage who would continue to choose independent or grammar schools, ES proposed that a minimum three form entry secondary campus in Swanage was viable. In terms of surplus places, the original reason for the review, our research showed that ‘leakage’ of students to other schools away from the Purbeck pyramid was as much to blame for falling rolls as was the ageing demographic of the region. We proposed that by building a school in the community we could begin to address this leakage and attract parents and children back to the town for education. Furthermore, Dorset Schools’ Forum concurred with the values held by ES; that children benefit from attending their local school. They suggested that children are more likely to be able to access the curriculum and any extended school services if their school was local, ‘the local secondary school should be able to provide a broad and balanced education with sufficient staff to meet their pastoral needs’ (Dorset Schools’ Forum, 2012).

The proposal from ES was based on the premise that children in the Swanage area should not be denied access to a genuinely local secondary school and the associated extended services. For example, Herston, an area on the outskirts of Swanage, was recognised as having the highest level of rural deprivation on the Isle of Purbeck. Nevertheless, DCC were proposing, in principle, to remove education that had previously been on the community of Herston’s doorstep. On the contrary, ES’s proposal recognised that a local school is a successful way of addressing the effects of poverty on educational outcomes, particularly in rural communities.

Furthermore, ES recognised that Purbeck School was still falling below the expectations of many parents compared to other comprehensive schools nearby, particularly in terms of ‘raw’ results. At Purbeck School 46% of students gained five GCSE A\*-C grades, compared to 53.4% for the national average and 59.4% average for Dorset. Only 9% of students achieved the English Baccalaureate compared to 12% nationally and 21% for Dorset (DfE, School League Tables, 2012). The consensus in the group was that parental and community involvement plus local collaboration would lead to better educational outcomes for children if they were educated in their own town. ES believed

that by creating a campus of the Purbeck School in Swanage, the community and parents would be more able to participate in activities and extended services.

Moreover, parents would be more likely to send their children to a school close to where they live. The case was therefore presented for a secondary campus in Swanage which would raise achievement, raise expectations and inspire community cohesion. The curriculum proposal drew on case studies from around the UK to show that with effective timetabling small schools can achieve excellent results whilst managing a broad curriculum (Fairfield High School, 2012).

However, this was not the view of DCC officers who were working on their own overview of secondary school modelling for Purbeck (Dorset for You, 2012). Their report drew on expertise from officers responsible for transport, standards, premises, planning and finance and outlined that for any secondary proposal to be considered by the project team it must aim to create a school system that is efficient, effective and fit for purpose that would enable all children and young people to achieve high standards. The report did not make recommendations or draw conclusions but stated implications of providing secondary schooling in Swanage. Despite a facade of neutrality it was evident from the way the report was written that DCC would not support a proposal for a school in Swanage. The main implications outlined in the report were based on the argument that small schools, particularly in rural areas, were challenged by the agenda of 14-19 education; according to the officers the twin site model would not be able to support a broad and balanced curriculum. The DCC team assumed that two separate schools in Swanage 11-16 (three form entry) and Wareham 11-18 (four form entry), would provide too great a challenge.

However, the general election in May 2010 was a turning point. A period of purdah<sup>3</sup> resulted in a delay to proceedings locally, meanwhile at a national level Conservatives and Liberal Democrats formed a new coalition government, bringing with them the potential of sweeping changes to education. In a speech to the DCC Community Overview Committee (COC) an ES representative stated that the change in national

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<sup>3</sup> Purdah is the time period between an election being announced and a result being published. During this time no new policies are allowed to be announced which could be advantageous to any parties during the election.

government provided the obvious trigger to halt the school review process and reappraise the political and economic environment in which the reorganisation was taking place. However, statutory notices for the closure of the middle schools were served, following the official adjudication process which sided with DCC.

Thus, for ES a new journey began, having neither saved the middle school nor persuaded DCC to create a satellite school in Swanage, a different way forward emerged as Michael Gove, then Secretary of State for Education, introduced the coalition government's free school policy (DfE, Free Schools, 2012). Until this point ES was a campaign group, fighting for the maintenance of secondary education in the town, however, by late 2010 we evolved into free school proposers, finding consolation in the adjudicator's report which stated that:

'Free schools' are not subject to the same stringent constraints as maintained schools and it may well be the case that sufficient numbers of parents will support the venture, notwithstanding the more limited curriculum it is likely to be able to offer, to make it a success. I therefore believe the LA is correct to proceed with its own plans without seeking to forestall or inhibit the development of the proposed free school. (Dorset for You, Adjudicator's report, 2010, p.26)

ES believed that the rationale for a free school in Swanage was strong and that we were justified in working towards its establishment. The introduction of the free school policy provided the opportunity to propose a new state-funded school for Swanage, independent of LA control. According to the government the aim of the free school policy enabled communities, such as Swanage, to establish schools, either to drive up standards or provide educational provision where there is none; ES had a strong case for both.

Therefore, ES made a formal proposal to the DfE in the summer of 2011 which explained the rationale for the school; with the closure of the middle school it was likely that Swanage would become the only town in Dorset without secondary provision and the largest town in the UK to have to send so many children so far to school. However, population projections demonstrated that there would be enough children in the area to warrant a secondary school (Appendix Six). ES stated that it is not in the educational or social interests of children and young people to make such lengthy journeys away from their community each day.

The proposal explained that the consequences of the reorganisation were likely to be damaging for Swanage's social, economic and environmental sustainability, a view repeatedly put to members of ES in discussion with planning experts, local families, businesses and residents. ES viewed the reorganisation and the proposed free school as an opportunity to return full secondary education to the town. There was sufficient demand, based upon consultation with parents, to sustain a small but viable school, capable of carefully managed expansion. The proposal outlined a school that would cater for all local young people whilst raising aspirations and challenging other schools in the area to improve their performance. ES aimed to create an intellectually rigorous learning community that would increase choice and competition whilst inspiring greater educational achievement in the area as a whole.

ES also expressed that as Swanage is situated at the eastern end of the Jurassic Coast, the UK's first natural UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is in a desirable location for a school as it is visited by thousands of students from around the world every year (Jurassic Coast, 2012). The town is a recognised centre of heritage, literary and arts activity, alongside the broader tourism and visitor industries. The Swanage School was proposed as a unique legacy for the future, set in the 'best outdoor classroom in the world'. Organisations such as Forest Schools (2012) and The Institute for Outdoor Learning (2013) are examples of educational initiatives that support learning outside the classroom as being intrinsically important to the development of children and young people. A school in Swanage was proposed as a potential centre of excellence for such learning.

Therefore the aim for the school, outlined in our proposal to the DfE, was to encourage greater innovation in educational provision by engaging with and modelling a wider range of approaches to learning. The intention was to provide a value-for-money system of education that focused on intellectual rigour and traditional values that would place the quality of relationships at the heart of the school. The aim was that the self-sustaining educational community created would be at the heart of learning in the local area and over time would become recognised as a centre of innovation and excellence at both a national and international level.



In his speech to parliament on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2011, Gove announced 55 new free schools had been approved to the pre-opening stage, The Swanage School being one of them. However, the key question ES grappled with was; how could the school be created to integrate the ideals of our proposed vision and values in reality? How could our aspirations be put into practice in the actuality of opening a school? Was it possible to achieve what we claimed in our proposal to the DfE; to improve educational practice in Swanage and influence social transformation in the community as a whole? This was a case of dreaming of a 'possible world' (Bruner, 1986).

### **Summary**

This chapter has explained my story as an educational practitioner and explored the journey of ES as a community action group. This contextualisation enables subsequent chapters to be understood in light of the lived experience of the research participants.

The next chapter explains the key concepts that pertain to the research; values, practical theology and the sacred.

## CHAPTER THREE - CONCEPTUALISATION

### Introduction

To make a case for an inductive and qualitative exploration of the influence of values it is important to examine the existing literature in relation to relevant terms and fields of study. This chapter explores the key conceptual areas of study; the understanding and meaning of the term values, the location of the research within the field of practical theology and the development of the concept of the sacred. However, although this process is important it must not detract from the originality of the findings, analysis and conclusions of the research. As Dunne states, ‘each researcher must present their research in a manner which is most appropriate to their particular study’ (Dunne, 2011).

### The meaning and influence of values

The derivations and validity of values have largely been left to the ‘uncertainties of philosophical speculation’ (Carlton, 1995, p.16). From a philosophical point of view discerning the meaning of values is part of the idealism versus empiricism debate, focusing on whether the concept of values is based on *a priori* or *a posteriori* reasoning. Carlton states that there may not be ‘ultimate values’ nor a ‘final authority’ for values but rather they are constructed patterns of meaning that do not really exist, based on ‘the ongoing flux of events’ in our lives (p.5). As with astronomers and their imaginary ‘constellations’ of stars, values do not seem to exist as objective, universal realities, but as an imposed order we place on our perceived ‘reality’. From this perspective, values are the result of how humans ‘pattern our experience so that it makes sense to us’ (p.5). Indeed, philosophers have been attempting to impose such order on perceived reality from Plato’s *Republic* and world of forms, to Kant’s theory of universalisability and the Categorical Imperative and more recently within MacIntyre’s discussion of virtue ethics (1981).

Therefore, developing an understanding of values based on universal categories, at first glance, seems to fall short of our actual experience. On one hand values seem to play an important role in day to day life, yet on the other they defy simple explanation and definition. Hechter et.al., (1993, p. x) liken them to the ‘black box’ of behavioural science, whereby answers to questions about the meaning of values are complex and at times intractable. Pattison (2004) states that ‘the language of values is ubiquitous’ (p.1)

and yet the notions and concepts about values that are in use in society are problematic. Although there is a universal meaning to the term values, i.e. ‘a value is something which people value’ (p.1), there are layers of secondary explanations, which make definition and concise conceptualisation difficult. Hence, conducting research into the influence of values is fraught with complexity.

The Oxford English Dictionary outlines seven definitions of the noun ‘value’, including ‘the principles or moral standards held by a person or social group; the generally accepted or personally held judgement of what is valuable and important in life’ (OED, 2013). However, the concept is elusive and often used in rhetoric, thus denigrating its meaning. Scholarship on values spans a variety of disciplines; education, philosophy, sociology, theology and psychology, which provides insight into how values might operate in human life and society, yet different disciplines within the social sciences and their related professions have approached the conceptualisation of values in a variety of ways (Pattison and Pill, 2004). Whereas sociologists have documented that values are attributed by members of society in changing social contexts (p.27) and seen them as ‘empirical variables in social life’ (Carlton, 1995, p.17), philosophers have been more likely to consider ‘what moral virtues and values might be desired’ of someone in a specific role in society in order to promote human flourishing (Pattison and Pill, 2004, p.27). The academic literature is scant on how values relate to professional practice (p.198), yet the influence of values frames the work of practitioners from a multitude of disciplines; doctors, nurses, clergy, charity workers and teachers, to name but a few. Moreover, despite the popularity of ‘mission statements’ and the plethora of ‘values driven’ organisations existing in contemporary society, complexity and ambiguity lie at the heart of what it means to be influenced by values, especially as what is espoused might be contradictory to what is enacted by individuals and organisations.

From a psycho-analytical perspective Freud (1856-1939) argued that there is a distinction between the conscious and unconscious mind, which affects how values are espoused and enacted (Freud, 1995, p.71). In Freudian terms our behaviour and actions can be symptoms of unconscious psychological problems that arise when the primitive sources of motivation for action, for example sexual impulses and aggression (id), conflict with the values and judgements a person develops from socialisation (superego). Freud proposed that a third dimension of the mind, the ego, mediates

between these two forces. However, at times, when the ego is particularly weak, it defends itself by making the conflict unconscious; hence a defence mechanism might cause a person to 'introject' (take in) the values of others, acting as if they were their own.

This approach is helpful in explaining how individuals and groups of people (the 'herd instinct') may respond to the interplay of forces operating within the mind, to the extent that their espoused and enacted values may contradict each other. However, it is limited by relativism, because the uniqueness of the human mind makes it difficult to establish absolutes about values, how they operate and how they influence human action and behaviour (Pattison, 2007, p.43). Interestingly, it is often when human behaviour and the norms of society challenge pre-conceived boundaries, that talk of what values mean takes precedence. For example, the recent threat of terrorist attacks and the perceived rise in religious extremism in the UK has led to the promotion of 'British values' on the curriculum in state schools (Ofsted, 2014).

However, although the derivation and meaning of values is not clear-cut, their influence can be observed at a personal, social and cultural level. Moreover, 'theoretical, methodological and empirical advances' into the understanding of individual and societal values have come from a number of disciplines; 'sociology, psychology, political science, philosophy, management and communications' (Rokeach, 1979, p.1). What seems tangible from such research is that the promotion of certain types of values are more essential to human harmony and sustainability than others.

Studies by social psychologists Rokeach (1973) and Schwartz (1992) have developed thinking about the meaning and understanding of values in everyday life. Rokeach discussed the difference between terminal and instrumental values (1973) and Schwartz, in his values theory, postulated a circular continuum of motivational values (1992). As the two most prominent and influential scholars in this field, both Rokeach and Schwartz claim that, despite uncertainty and ambiguity surrounding their origin and meaning, there are universal human values. Rokeach identified sets of 18 values, limiting his types to 'terminal' values (goals, for example, self respect, happiness and equality) and 'instrumental' values (modes of achieving goals, for example, honesty, responsibility and forgiveness). Schwartz developed this thinking to define values as

‘conceptions of the desirable that influence the way people select action and evaluate events’ (1987). Following a wide ranging empirical study across 44 countries and involving 25,000 participants he concluded that there are ten specific types of universal values, encompassing 56 individual values. According to Schwartz, the universality of values is grounded in three qualities; human needs as biological organisms, the requirements of social interaction and ‘the survival and welfare needs of groups’ (Schwartz, 2012, p.4). A specific focus on Schwartz’s thinking provides a helpful framework from which to analyse qualitative research findings.

### **The Schwartz values theory**

The central premise of Schwartz’s theory is that values form a circular, motivational continuum and ‘are used to characterise cultural groups, societies, and individuals, to trace change over time and to explain the motivational bases of attitudes and behavior [sic]’ (2012, p.3). Schwartz states that some values conflict with one another (benevolence and power) whereas others are compatible (conformity and security). Therefore, ‘the ‘structure’ of values refers to these relations of conflict and congruence among values’ (p.3). Schwartz’s work has become implicit in the thinking of other theorists, and is pertinent to the findings and conclusions of this investigation. His conception of values provides a helpful framework from which to analyse my data in that it specifies features of values that resonate with my findings. For example, values serve as standards or criteria, values transcend specific actions and situations and values are beliefs infused with affect and feeling (p.3). Most poignantly Schwartz suggests that values operate in dynamic relationships; ‘actions in pursuit of any value have consequences that conflict with some values but are congruent with others’ (p.8). The circular structure he proposes portrays the pattern of conflict and congruity between the types of values he identifies as being universal.

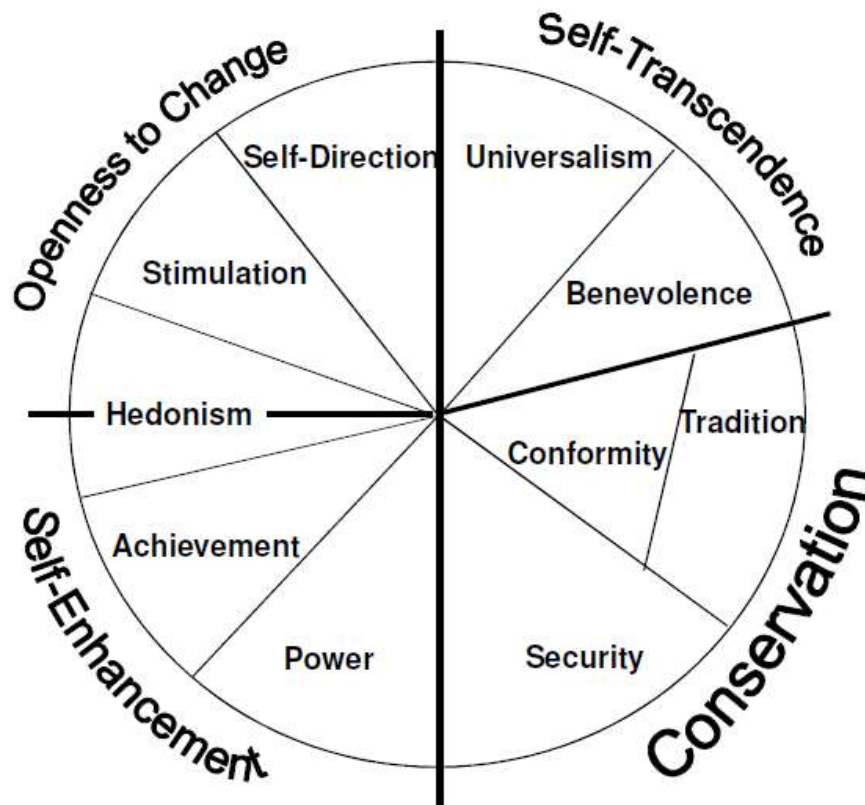


Figure 3.1 Theoretical model of relations among ten motivational types of values (Schwartz, 2012).

As figure 3.1 suggests, one dimension contradicts another, for example, ‘openness to change’ contradict ‘conservation’ types of values. Similarly, ‘self-enhancement’ contradict ‘self-transcendent’ values. Despite this, the circular nature of the diagram represents a dynamic continuum of influence that values have as they guide action in human life and relationships. Furthermore, as Schwartz identifies; ‘there is one dynamic principle that organises the structure of values: congruence and conflict among the values that are implicated simultaneously in decisions’ (p.13). This principle helps to explain the influence of values in motivating humans to act and is central to my investigation into the influence of values in founding The Swanage School. Whereas values are influential as ‘standards of judgement’ (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.25) for the way people act as individuals and within community, simultaneously they can collide in contradiction with the living standards of others, resulting in the urgency of reflection to influence change. Whitehead and McNiff (2006) propose that values are

sometimes lived in accordance with and sometimes they are contradicted (p.25), a proposition that is consistent with Schwartz's theory.

These reflections helped shape my understanding of how values influenced change in the context of founding the school. Although members of ES understood the word 'values' in different ways, did not necessarily share the same values as each other and espoused and enacted their values in contradictory ways, their collective influence was significant in realising social change. Thus, exploring the interplay of discord and harmony, which existed in the context of this research project, was an important part of the journey towards understanding the influence of values in social transformation, as the group held difference in tension whilst moving forward collaboratively in a practice-based context.

### **The conceptualisation of values in educational practice-based contexts**

It is important to set this research in a practical context, in order to explain how the conceptualisation of values relates to this practice-based study. Beyond the academic literature it is helpful to explore the common practice of organisations that are 'values-based'. It is the practical twist in the interplay between 'real-life' and values that underpins this research and draws me towards literature that is purposeful and action-based, for example, The Common Cause Handbook (Public Interest Research Centre, (PIRC), 2011), where the premise is that values underpin actions when dealing with 'causes'.

ES, as an organisation, was not only values based but 'cause' driven and its purpose was to create a school that would overturn the vested interests and dominant structures being imposed on the community from an external source (DCC). According to PIRC, drawing on the Schwartz values theory, it is the 'intrinsic' self-transcendent values, for example, care for others, concern for the environment, which 'frame' (embody, express) purposeful 'cause-based' work in order to have lasting benefits (PIRC, 2011, p.1). These values are in contrast to 'extrinsic' self-enhancement values centred on external approval or reward, for example, wealth, material success and power.

It could be argued that the work of ES was originally inspired by intrinsic values derived from the Human Scale Education Movement (HSEM), which was founded in 1985 and grounded in a 'small is beautiful' (Schumacher, 1973) mentality whereby 'small working units within organisations, such as schools, could act as a vehicle for establishing personal fulfilment, productivity and environmental sustainability' (Tasker, 2014). Whereas Schumacher placed people at the heart of economic sustainability, Tasker explains that HSEM places children at the heart of education. She argues that when children are educated within small educational communities they are more likely to grow-up in a framework of caring for each other, their community and the environment. In relation to values this is a self-transcendent framework.

Tasker is scathing of the legacy that late 20<sup>th</sup> Century education has bequeathed, with its focus on targets and schools as 'quasi markets', based on the assumption 'that market forces are the drivers of society' (2014). Instead she calls for a values framework that will relate to what it means to be human, whereby students develop into enlightened, environmentally aware and cooperative people searching for meaning and creativity as well as employability. This suggests alignment with the Schwartz values theory and PIRC's conclusion that development of intrinsic values will most effectively promote the important 'causes' that will build human capacity, harmony and flourishing.

Of course, such intrinsic values are innately situated at the heart of most teachers' practice and as the cornerstone of schools' mission statements, and yet putting them into practice, to have real *value*, is more of a challenge. One of the main barriers to enacting, rather than merely espousing, values in an educational context is the extent to which an individual child is known by their teachers, something which Tasker believes is virtually impossible in a large school setting, unless smaller units within those schools are created. However, if such intrinsic values, focused on the quality of relationship and respect, do lie at the heart of effective education and if smaller units, even within larger schools are developed, how can this be equated with the dominant forces (extrinsic values) in educational policy that strive towards a 'one size fits all' curriculum and assessment process that sifts out the academically gifted and sets many others on the trajectory of failure, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Wilshaw, 2013)?



If our values are guiding forces that shape thought and action, it needs to be recognised that they are not always in harmony but at times function in contradiction. It is the influence of our values and the interplay of dynamic forces between the intrinsic and the extrinsic push and pull, that shapes and forms our collective action alongside other influential factors in our lives such as past experience and cultural norms. However, there is nothing more influential than our values in the way we live our lives in relation to each other as 'values act in a dynamic and interacting system' and they 'represent our guiding principles: our broadest motivations, influencing the attitudes we hold and how we act' (PIRC, 2011, p.8/9).

If it is the case that there are universal intrinsic and extrinsic values, operating in a dynamic system of conflict and confluence, it is important to note that we are not automata, programmed to place the same weight on the same value at the same time. Humans are motivated by different values at different times, as well as other factors such as economics, (for example, one cannot always afford to buy organic food) and social norms or extrinsic factors, (for example, one may desire personal recognition rather than achieving a communal goal).

Furthermore, within educational settings although it is important to favour the intrinsic and promote values that will benefit the group/community and not just the individual, this is not always straightforward in a performance driven system of appraisal and performance related pay. The Index for Inclusion (2014) attempts to clarify the relationship between values and actions within schools and stresses the importance of developing a framework that reinforces an effective 'values-led' approach to improvement. This involves a 'careful piecing together' of values, for example, 'equality, rights, participation, community, respect for diversity, sustainability, non-violence, trust, compassion, honesty, courage, joy, love, hope/optimism, and beauty' (Index for Inclusion, 2014). The term 'wisdom' is added to this list, with a non-theological meaning, to indicate how action may require the careful weighing up of competing possibilities, so there is a balance between the dual and dichotomous motivations that the influence of different types of values bring.

### **Dichotomy and duality – finding the balance**

Dichotomy and duality played an important part in shaping my working definition and understanding of values and how they might operate. The existing literature suggests that values have dichotomous relationships; conscious and unconscious (Freud, 1995, p.71), terminal and instrumental (Rokeach, 1973), self-enhancing and self-transcending (Schwartz, 1992) intrinsic and extrinsic (PIRC, 2011), epistemological and ontological (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006). Furthermore, the dual influence of contradiction/conflict and congruence (Schwartz 1992, Whitehead and McNiff, 2006) helped me to explore how values might function in balancing the dichotomies and contradiction in order to positively influence congruence and action in the context of ES.

This wisdom-based balancing of possibilities is a theme that runs through my analysis of the influence of values in founding the school. Furthermore, there is also a poignant connection to the theological meaning of wisdom, which emerges from engagement with the field of practical theology and the concept of the sacred.

### **Practical theology**

Engagement with practical theology involves understanding the field as a whole and recognising its strengths and limitations. It is important to outline how I selected an appropriate model of practical theology in generating my living theory. My theological pre-commitments are important factors in understanding how I engaged with practical theology as a means to explore traces of belief without having to commit to a specific religion.

Practical theology is used in this study to analyse and critique the influence of values on actions and behaviours, not from the basis of the Christian church or wider religion but from a worldview which identifies a ‘trace of the sacred’ (Ganzevoort, 2009). My perspective touches on many of the common characteristics of practical theology in terms of reflection on lived experience, the adoption of an inter-disciplinary approach, critical dialogue between theological principles and contemporary experience and a desire to work within a radical model of theology that is in dialogue with contemporary culture and society (Pattison and Lynch, 2005, p.410).

### **The development of practical theology**

Theology is 'in fact an essentially practical activity' (Ballard, 1992, p.27). In the eighteenth century Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) identified and theorised practical theology as a discipline that was the 'proper end point of all theological study' (Pattison and Lynch, 2005, p.409). He understood practice to mean the application of principles uncovered by philosophical, historical and systematic theology. However, Schleiermacher's deductive approach was narrow in that it applied theory to practice, a model which post-war Protestant and pastoral theology has moved away from (p.409). There has been a 'fundamental shift' as we now live in a pluralistic society (Ballard and Pritchard, 2006, p.4), which demands a response from theology that not only travels from the academic and intellectual to the professional and clerical, but also the other way round.

However, practical theology has often been seen as the 'poor relation' to systematic theology and biblical studies (Campbell, 2000, p.79). Moreover, the perception of practical theology as the equivalent to a first-aid kit for pastoral care has not been helpful in balancing the relationship between the academic and theoretical theological disciplines and their 'poor relation'. On the other hand, practical theologians have deemed systematic approaches to be irrelevant and inapplicable (p.79). Perhaps the most significant difficulty in the development of practical theology as a respected discipline is defining the place it has in the world beyond the church. If it merely acts as a toolbox of techniques for 'spiritual maintenance' (p.80) in an ailing church then it is difficult to see how its contemporary role can be anything more than a 'bridge' between theory and practice (Ballard, 1992, p.29). However, the movement of practical theology towards an 'experiential-inductive' method has helped to clarify its status 'as an autonomous field of theological inquiry' (Pattison and Lynch, 2005, p.409) and a radical one at that.

The work of US theologian Seward Hiltner (1909-84) was important in establishing practical theology as an inductive rather than deductive approach. Whereas other theological disciplines 'lay down the norms for understanding practical functions' (Campbell, 2000, p.81), Hiltner suggested that it is the study of practical functions themselves, which produces theological insights. He was influenced by, yet critical of, the work of Paul Tillich (1886-1965) and his method of critical correlation between

‘contemporary experience’ and ‘the theological tradition’ (Pattison and Lynch, 2005, p.416). Hiltner argued that the ‘answers’ do not always come from the side of theology but rather a ‘two-way street’ is possible so that ‘culture may find answers to questions raised by faith as well as to assert that faith has answers to questions raised by culture’ (Hiltner, 1958, p.222).

Despite being influenced by Tillich’s model of critical correlation Hiltner ‘anticipates the revised critical correlation of David Tracy (b.1939) and others’ (Graham, 2002, p.71), by articulating the ‘theological nature of pastoral ministry as a process of dialogue between the revealed tradition and the questions and insights emerging from any given personal encounter’ (p.71). Furthermore, the rise in interest in the social sciences and their related professions such as social work and education, meant that theologians had to ‘enter into dialogue’ (Ballard and Pritchard, 2006, p.4) with new challenges, both intellectually and in practice.

On the other hand, practical theology is not a clean-cut discipline, less of a two-way street and more of a busy intersection; a junction where the practitioner becomes caught up in the fragmentation of lived experience in relation to their beliefs and values and the complexities of contemporary society. Therefore, propositions deriving from practical theological research should be ‘transformative for restructuring individuals, communities, and society, whether within the church or outside it’ (Campbell, 2000, p.78). It should work towards the development of practical wisdom from insights drawn from methods and models that are inventive, imaginative and intuitive. Hence, the definition and nature of practical theology must be shaped by the need for it to be more politically aware and theologically courageous (Campbell, 2000, p.84). Campbell outlined a redefinition that involves practical theology being concerned with ‘specific social structures and individual initiatives’ found either inside or outside the church, however, he admits it will inevitably be ‘fragmentary and poorly systematized’ (Campbell, 2000, p.85). Campbell’s redefinition sets practical theology the task of ‘selecting contemporary situations from the life of the church and the world and setting them alongside the current theories and research conclusions of biblical scholars, church historians and systematic theologians’, in this sense practical theology is both practical and critical, yet relevant to the modern world (p.85).

However, Campbell asks; do practical theologians have the temerity to suggest they can discern where God is at work, say in international politics, or in the works of writers and artists, or in the dilemmas of modern technological society?’ (p.86). His answer, with which I concur, is that ‘*some* branch of theology must be concerned with matters which directly affect human well-being’ and that this task seems particularly suited to the practical theologian. However, what of the practitioner who feels they have lost their theological voice in a ‘secular’ context, where perhaps only a trace of their belief in God remains? For them it might be simpler to adopt a ‘death of God’ perspective and ‘relegate’ practical theology to the realm of theories such as sociology or psychology. On the contrary, the traces of God that remain alive in my worldview, despite significant experiences that have ‘desecrated’ those remnants of belief, are at the heart of my living theory, which explains how and why my work is most relevant and challenging when situated in a practical theological context.

Locating an appropriate model of practical theology requires understanding the wider disciplinary field, which has emerged from the post Second World War era. Following Schleiermacher’s applied method of practical theology, other approaches emerged and professionals such as social workers, teachers and nurses developed ‘new models of training that combined academic learning and fieldwork, theoretical and critical models and induction into practice’ (Ballard and Pritchard, 2006, p.63). Whilst practical theology became the arena for the professional clergy to be taught practical skills, there was a concern that there might be a total ‘abdication of theological responsibility’ (p.63). However, several models of practical theology exist, which aim to take responsibility for the deep significance that theological reflection can serve in a dynamic and ever changing contemporary world.

For example, the habitus model (Farley,1983) is concerned with developing a conscious mindset to develop good habits, or virtues, such as courage and love, which requires training of the mind, heart and will (Ballard and Pritchard, 2006, p.74). This model appeals to my agnostic perspective in that it enables me to reflect on my Christian heritage in relation to my secular context and nurture habits that can flourish without an insistence on alignment to the norms and strictures of an explicitly religious framework. However, embracing this model in a communal sense, as it is necessarily intended, is more problematic in communities and groups such as ES, who grapple with which

standards and values should be conformed to in order for shared practical wisdom to result.

Another approach is the praxis model which ‘subjects everything to an analytical critique’ and, in the case of Christian practical theology, recovers the ‘basic gospel imperative’ (p.71). The praxis model is often referred to as the liberation model (Paver, 2006. p.58), whereby reflection on the Bible and traditions of Christianity lead to a critical understanding of a situation where an injustice needs to be transformed. However, as Paver points out, the injustice need not be ‘rampant’, what is important is the method of reflection. Whereas this model had some resonance with my work, particularly in the sense of undertaking action-reflection in order to transform a perceived injustice, I was not attempting to produce a fully fledged theological model of social justice in respect to education, which would be more akin to the pursuit of practical theologians engaging with this approach. However, the praxis model finds points of convergence with a third model for practical theology; the critical correlation model, which is a more appropriate location for my study, particularly in its adapted form as the critical conversation model (Pattison, 2000b).

### **Critical correlation model**

The development of models such as Tillich’s critical correlation method sought to secure a ‘theological recovery’ in post-war Christian thinking (Ballard and Pritchard, 2006, p.63). It was Tillich who suggested that ‘human questions concerning meaning and existence encounter a response from the gospel in revelation given by God in Christ’ (p.64). Tillich (1951, p.8) roots the action reflection cycle in a ‘critical correlation’ of questions and answers derived from the relationship between human existence and the Christian message. However, as Tracy suggests, Tillich’s correlation is non-critical in the sense that theology is not in ‘conversation’ with culture. Tracy proposes a revised correlation, aimed at relieving suffering in the world, which creates ‘reconciliation between the principal values, cognitive claims, and existential faith of both the re-interpreted post modern consciousness and a reinterpreted Christianity’ (Tracy, 1975, p.32). In this sense a revised critical correlation resonates with the practical theological perspective of my research, with the object and audience as society (Ganzevoort, 2009, pp.8-12) and values being a reinterpreted form of the sacred.

There are many derivations of the critical correlation theme, for example, there is the approach that sets the tradition in dialogue with a situation. Another approach, championed by Browning, brings together pastoral concerns and ethics in a modern society of ‘moral pluralism, moral confusion and moral relativism’ (1990, p.365). He explains how society’s commitment to ‘technical rationalization’ has resulted in a split between private and public values, making a public discourse about ethics unsustainable (Graham, 2002, p.84). Another derivation of the critical correlation model claims there is a correlation focused on hermeneutics; how humans communicate and how meanings are shared and conveyed (Ballard and Pritchard, 2006, p.66). However, it is Pattison’s adaptation of the work of Tillich and Browning, the model of critical *conversation*, which I have used in generating my own living theory.

### **Critical conversation model**

Using Pattison’s critical conversation, whereby the questions and answers can derive from a conversational relationship between the epistemological experiences of ES and the ontological ‘message’ of our values, is an appropriate structure. For Tillich the essence of God is in ‘being’, similarly and metaphorically, the ‘spirit’ (sacredness) of ES was in the influence of our values, but also beyond that, in our ‘being’. The mutual, cyclical correlation, in the form of reflective conversation, that took place between our situation and our values, reflected on at the validation group stage, created an interdependency between the wider practice of ES, the research and a potential conversation with society.

The role of authentic and critical conversation is also recognised by Veling’s approach to ‘living theologically’, which demands active listening to the voice of the other. He states that if all of our listening merely ‘led back to me’ (2005, p.60), we might as well not be in dialogue at all. The critical factor for Veling is to enter into relationships that understand a voice other than their own, through inclusive conversation:

If I only let my preformed opinions or readymade answers lead the conversation, then I may as well be talking to myself, because everything I say will only lead back to me and to what I already know. If interpretation means anything at all, it must surely mean trying to understand a voice that is other than my own. (p.60)

Veling is inspired by French Jewish philosopher Levinas, who says that we search for truth outside of ourselves (2005, p.79). Levinas says that we are turned towards the

‘elsewhere’, the ‘otherwise’ and ‘the other’. His concern is that truth is appropriated into the self, rather than in response to ‘the call of the other’. Levinas sees this as a worrying philosophical trend, to perceive knowing and truth as only part of our ‘self-knowledge’ and worldview. Veling points out that Levinas places priority on the call of the other ‘who asks after me’ (p.85), in other words, we act in response to the other, forming acts of self-transcendence, rather than self-enhancement.

Therefore the critical conversation model brings together the complex relationship between lived experience, theology and other disciplines such as sociology and psychology. Pattison (2000b) draws on his research in the secular setting of health and social welfare to develop a model that he hopes will bring simplicity and clarity to otherwise abstract and theory-laden theological methods. He wants the word ‘theology’ to be set free from ‘dusty academic bondage’ (p.137) and his claim that ‘good theology’ is ‘dynamic, searching and open-ended’, entices me to engage with critical conversation as the primary and most appropriate practical theological model.

Pattison describes theology as ‘contemporary enquiry’ (2000a. p.135) that concerns a ‘quest for adequate and true responses to the realities of human and religious experience’ (p.137). Rather than there being ‘theology’, Pattison’s view is that there are myriad ‘theologies’, developed by anyone who reflects on their individual experience in light of faith; there is ‘no formal norm’. To Pattison ‘there can be no one right way of doing theology and perhaps one’s own way is as good as anyone else’s’ (p.138). Theological reflection of this nature results in conclusions being drawn about theology which are divergent and contradictory; therefore Pattison proposes that it should be ‘critical’ through the model of conversation.

He suggests that the practical theologian should imagine themselves being involved in a three-way conversation between;

- (a) her own ideas, beliefs, assumptions and perceptions,
- (b) the beliefs, assumptions and perceptions provided by the Christian tradition (including the bible) and,
- (c) the contemporary situation being examined (p.139).

The value of this model is that it expands the practitioner’s thinking, perception and insight, whilst enabling reflection on how to determine the way we behave and ‘what



type of action we might adopt' (p.138). It also releases faith from the bonds of Christianity and church to engage in a wider enquiry about what it means to have 'faith' in the present day. From Pattison's perspective the conversational model has several advantages; for example, it provides a real context whereby a conversation, even if with imaginary participants, is a living thing which evolves and changes. Furthermore, the participants are changed in the process, through their learning and through developing conversational skills such as listening and attentiveness. Critical conversations enable a diversity of voices to be heard, where there does not have to be agreement or enforced compliance. Part of the attraction of this model is that the process acknowledges the difficulty that being in conversation can bring. The tension of the gaps that exist between participants' assumptions and understandings is at the very heart of the matter; it is 'as much about exploring and living with gaps as well as with similarities' (p.140). As Pattison points out, these kinds of conversations are 'complex and sophisticated' (p.140) and in the context of my research the model is helpful in offering a process whereby participants can engage in critical, inquiry based dialogue in 'dynamic interaction' regardless of their assumptions, understandings or beliefs. Therefore, it is possible to ask certain questions related to the influence of values and undertake a creative critique that draws on both secular and faith perspectives whilst reflecting on practical situations, such as founding a school.

Pattison's model is appropriate because it demonstrates the type of questions one can ask in conversation about the influence of values; for example, what do we hope for? What is the purpose and meaning of our action? Where do our values come from and how do they influence us? Pattison suggests that even in a secular setting these kinds of questions are theological and religious. This type of theological enquiry is not about 'handing down truths from the past' (p.141), but rather about beginning a critical dialogue that is in tune with theological reflection as a tool to interrogate the lived experiences that we share. This approach is apt for analysing the relative positions of a group such as ES, as we attempted to make sense of the meaning and purpose of our lives and what drove our actions towards transformation, within ourselves and within the community in which we live.

On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge that the model has its limitations and cannot provide externally validated answers or eternal truths. Using such a model is

driven by my own interest in spirituality and the realm of 'the sacred'; however, my colleagues in ES may well have preferred a different dialogical partner, perhaps sociological or psychological? Moreover, As Pattison suggests, critical conversational reflections and conclusions are 'idiosyncratic' in that they are not intended for 'all people at all times' (p.143). Therefore, I hope that by positing some propositions as a result of this reflection, rather than attempting to establish eternal truths, others will ask further questions to take the critical conversation forward.

Pattison's final critique of his model is that engagement in a theologically reflective, critical conversation probably says more about the particular individual undertaking it 'than it does about the secular situation or the Christian theological tradition' (p.143). He encourages self criticism by undertaking the critical conversation in a group, rather than on one's own, in order to 'maximise resources for knowledge and dialogue' (p.143). Therefore, despite ownership of the research ultimately resting with me, I have taken heed of this message and ameliorated the risk of introspection by involving my colleagues in dialogue at the validation stage of the research.

Conversation is an everyday activity and a medium that builds understanding, regardless of the level of prior knowledge or expertise a participant has about a given topic. Engaging in a conversational model of practical theology enabled me to be in dialogue without anyone or anything prescribing the course that should be taken. This approach is open to transformation; opening people's minds to 'new ways of seeing and possibilities of acting' (Pattison, 1994). This version of practical theology enables a view of reality that is not propositional and rational but that recognises complexity, ambiguity and the diversity of realities that exist. The analysis of a situation, in light of theological insight, helps to 'construct positive directions for proceeding' whilst finding imaginative ways of discussing and encapsulating how specific issues might be addressed, in a way that the general public can understand.

By adopting a practical theological approach I am attempting to bring insights to a context that would otherwise be lacking. Pattison suggests that practitioners (particularly managers) in 'secular' contexts can learn much from theology by becoming articulate and critical about one's beliefs and assumptions and by becoming more aware about their involvement in activities that have 'value and ethical

connotations' (1997, p.155). This is where my research into the influence of values in founding a school intersects with a practical theological approach; through reflection on the influence of values we might 'begin to enter into meaningful, responsive ethical dialogue about directions and actions' (p.155) in founding our school. Pattison states that he is hard pressed to think of contemporary practical theologians whose work really flourishes, or as he puts it, 'sings' (Pattison, 2007, p.286). Yet he suggests that the distinguishing feature of the discipline is that it should help people become 'more active, creative beings' (p.287). Therefore the critical conversation I engaged in explains how I and ES became more active and creative beings and thus learnt how to 'sing'. This process involved exploring how and why the influence of values created meaning and purpose that were relevant and challenging in our lives and took on a 'sacred' form. In this sense the 'secular' is the context where the 'sacred' evokes awe and passion in our actions, rather than being set apart from each other, they are essentially interconnected; entwined.

### **The sacred**

Theology has formed my worldview, I feel that 'I cannot get away from it' (Pattison, 2007, p.197). My upbringing was shaped by a Christian faith, which was desecrated by experiences that damaged my idyllic, youthful formation and stifled ongoing spiritual development throughout my adulthood. Undertaking this professional doctorate is a life experiment to re-establish the relationship between theology and my personal growth, as a means to reconnect with the relevance and challenge of the 'sacred' dimension of living. Pattison explored the phenomenon of shame in his life (2000a) and explains that his over-riding aim was to investigate the relationship between the ideology and practice associated with Christianity and human experiences (p.12). My aim is to reclaim an association between the remnants, or traces, of the sacred and my lived experience, without the innocent idealism that belief in an all loving and all powerful God is going to protect me. As Pattison suggests, while God feels less present, perhaps more of me will be available to myself and to others (p.324). I want to be in conversation with sacred traces that remain by exploring how my theological pre-commitments and interest in the concept of the sacred might correlate to the life I now lead in a so-called 'secular', agnostic context.

### **Conceptualisation of the sacred**

The term 'sacred' derives from the Latin *Sacer* (restricted, set-off) and is related to terms such as *numen* (God, mysterious power) and the Greek *hagios* (holy, sacred). The Encyclopædia Britannica relates the concept to 'the power, being, or realm understood by religious persons to be at the core of existence and to have a transformative effect on their lives and destinies' (2014). However, it is broader than religion, as human existence seems impossible without it (Ellul, 1986). Conceptualisation of the sacred developed within disciplines such as 'comparative' religion and sociology in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Scholars such as Söderblom (1866-1931) and Otto (1869-1837) explored it in relation to holiness (Söderblom) and the human experience of the 'numinous', which was, according to Otto, an *a priori*, sacred realm. Within the discipline of sociology Durkheim (1858-1917) explored the sacred in relation to things that were 'set apart' (2012) from the profane (everyday activities). According to Durkheim, where communities separate the profane from the sacred, religion emerges. His argument was that the social construction of the sacred is a transcendental representation of society, which need not disappear with the demise of religion. For Durkheim it is the human experience of social life from which the sacred emerges; a socially constructed experience of living which 'inspires religious feelings' (2001, p.41). He stresses that religion is metaphorical and constructed in relation to beings or things which humans consider valuable.

Post modern interpretations in contemporary western society do not separate the sacred and the profane in the way that Durkheim did. My understanding of the sacred draws me to post-modern interpretations, which establish the concept as a continuum of human life and all that it entails (Cupitt, 2000, p.73). It is not so much that sacred things are set apart, but that sacredness is recognised when things are interconnected, when patterns and cycles of meaning and purpose emerge that reflect unity and transformation; that is when 'it all begins to make sense' (p.73). Sacredness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is bound up in the plurality of life, it can be found in every-day popular culture and in the leisure activities that people pursue; walking, dancing, climbing, singing. Similarly in the pursuit of ES as a community action group, there was a sacred trace in the patterns of meaning created through the flow and influence of values; Tweed defines this as a 'sacroscape' that transforms 'people and places, the social arena and the natural terrain' (2008, location 680). The realm of the sacred is no longer set apart and religion

does not have a monopoly on the term, on the contrary, the old religious meanings have been diffused to the extent that ‘anything may suddenly strike us as holy’ (Cupitt, 2000, p.70).

A cultural ‘sociology of the sacred’ has developed (Lynch, 2012), which recognises the content and structure of sacred forms that go beyond the conventional boundaries of religion to help us see the sacred in our lives and in what ways it might be a constructive force for social life (p.8). Lynch provides a working definition whereby the sacred is ‘what people collectively experience as absolute, non-contingent realities which present normative claims over the meaning and conduct of social life’. These sacred forms are constituted by ‘constellations of specific symbols, thought/discourse, emotions, and actions grounded in the body’ (p.47). Lynch suggests that these constellations constitute groups who share these discourses, sentiments and practices. In relation to my research I am postulating that values are non-contingent realities that presented normative claims over the meaning and conduct of the social life of ES, in the context of founding a school. Throughout our journey, the influence of values created a sacred form that was a ‘constructive force for social life’.

However, it needs to be recognised that sacred forms ‘simultaneously construct the evil which might profane it and the pollution of this sacred reality’ (p.47). Lynch recognises the light and shade that sacred forms reflect and uses poignant case studies, such as child abuse in Irish residential schools (p.54), to demonstrate that although sacred commitments can be a positive source for social living they can also legitimate offence and conflict. Therefore, in drawing a comparison between Lynch’s sociological definition of the sacred I must at the same time be cautious and represent the light and shade that my journey revealed.

Whilst respecting the twists and turns of the path I travelled, I began to explore how the influence of values might relate to the concept of the sacred. I focused on the idea that the sacred is a centre ‘around which one’s life gravitates and a presence that evokes awe and passion’ (Ganzevoort, 2009, p.3) and that the sacred dimension in life is a ‘gravitational pull’ for social action (Lynch, 2012, p.135). It was an exploration to find patterns of meaning that moved beyond a traditional religious view of the sacred but which identified ‘transcending patterns of action and meaning’ in the work that ES was

immersed in (Ganzevoort, 2009, p.3). It was a practical theological pursuit that was not embedded in conventional theology but was confluent with wider sociological ideas to identify ‘meaningful patterns between culture and social life’ (Lynch, 2012, p.51). These sociological and theological perspectives helped to shape my working definition of the sacred as I explored the ways in which values acted as forces of ‘gravitational pull’ that evoked ‘awe and passion’ creating balanced and meaningful patterns of influence in my life and that of my colleagues in ES.

### **Summary**

This chapter has explored the concepts of values and the sacred in the context of the existing literature and contextualised the research within the fields of practical theology and living theory.

The next chapter explores how the research strategy and design were tools in the development of exploring how values, emerging from the story, influenced practice. This process involved delving into the very heart of what it means to be a human ‘being’. Consequently new truth and meaning was established through the wisdom of ordinary lives.

## **CHAPTER FOUR - RESEARCH STRATEGY AND DESIGN**

### **Introduction**

This chapter outlines the research strategy and design, in order to provide a ‘philosophical and technical foundation’ for the approach adopted (Trafford and Leshem, 2008, p.89). The methodology was inductive and a key consideration was the integration of theoretical and practical perspectives in order to generate theory whose validity could be tested against ‘publicly communicable standards of judgement’ (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.1). According to Whitehead a methodology is not only a collection of methods used in the research but is distinguished by a philosophical understanding of the principles that organise the ‘how of the enquiry’ (2012a). The principles that organised the ‘how’ of this enquiry were grounded in practical theology and living theory methodology, a form of action research.

Hence, this chapter introduces and analyses living theory, the paradigm in which the research was set, the influence of practical theology as a ‘dialogue partner’ and the context of the methodological and conceptual framework. The overall purpose is to explain how the influence of values was ‘unearthed’ and why The Swanage School is proposed as a living educational theory.

### **Living theory**

An educational living theory is an ‘explanation produced by an individual for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation in which they live and work’ (Whitehead, 2012b). A living theory methodology enables practitioners to identify how values, as standards of professional judgement, can influence and improve practice in order to generate theory. This thesis is an explanation of how the values of ES influenced the formation of The Swanage School, in the form of a living educational theory.

Noffke (1997) points out that to some extent this form of research methodology is insufficient in exploring social change as the reliance on self-awareness and individuality does not ‘address the social basis of personal belief systems’ (p.329). Furthermore, she states that it seems unable to ‘address social issues in terms of the connections between personal identity, the claim of experiential knowledge, as well as power and privilege in society’. Whitehead acknowledges, yet dismisses, this accusation

by citing examples of doctoral work which are inclusive and embrace values of social justice, directly countering Noffke's critique. Examples of doctoral work using living educational theory as an approach to research can be found on Whitehead's website (Action Research, 2014). He claims that the doctoral work he has supervised enhances the 'expression of values of social justice and holistic educational practice thus providing evidence of an educational engagement with issues of power and privilege in society' (Whitehead, 2009, p.94). For the purpose of this research Noffke's criticism is invalid in that the methodology addressed issues of power and privilege associated with the context of establishing a new school. I concur with Whitehead that the intention of living theory is to embrace values related to social justice and to explore how these values are interconnected. This research involved a direct engagement with issues of power and privilege; within the group, in the community and within the national educational agenda. Therefore, living theory is justified as the methodology for my research, within an action research framework.

### **Action research**

Action research underpins practice and life experiences with philosophy, politics and theory. It enables the 'web of relationships, events, influences, role models and experiences' (Reason and Bradbury, 2008, p.16) to strengthen the action researcher's practice. Theory and practice come together as a force for action:

Theory and practice, thinking persons and life experiences, how they interact, fuse, and react in the search for explanations to understand realities and promote social progress appear to have a driving force. (2008, p.16)

This methodology of interaction focused on the life experiences (driving force) of a tight-knit group of people who held a common purpose; to open a new school. It provided an effective platform to explore the influence of values and to explain the reflective nature of the research, whilst maintaining strong roots in the purpose of educational transformation.

Action research has developed significantly from its origins in the 1940s. Kurt Lewin (1946) is often credited as one of its founding fathers but in terms of education Lawrence Stenhouse's (1971) work on the Humanities Curriculum Project left a lasting legacy. John Elliott, at the University of East Anglia, has since been influential in



enhancing Stenhouse's work to develop action research as a form of professional development for teachers, albeit based on a social science model (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.21). Whilst Elliot developed action research in East Anglia, Whitehead developed new approaches at the University of Bath. His methodology resulted in the living theory approach.

Within education, action research has particular relevance to inquiries in schools. Action researchers 'study social reality but acting within it' and subsequently study the effects of their actions (Anderson et al., 2007, p.1). They can be 'outsiders' who work alongside 'insiders' to research problems, however, it is more usual in schools for action researchers to be teachers, in other words 'practitioner researchers'. In the context of this research, although I am a practitioner researcher, it was the 'action research' that took precedence; it was the significance of the findings in terms of action that was central. My role in ES was one amongst many, and although I was influential, that influence was theoretically of equal weight, value and significance to the contribution of other members of the team. Therefore action research, in the context of this thesis, refers to the reflection of a group of people rather than merely the reflections of an individual. Having said that, my particular influence undoubtedly created bias in the analysis and discussion of the findings as it is impossible for an author to have a completely neutral stance. Therefore, the work is presented from my interpretive perspective yet validated by my colleagues in ES. The validation process will be explained later in this chapter.

Action research involves reflection on assertions that are presented for consideration by those involved in the project. There is an orientation towards reflection on such assertions that leads to change (action) in a group's thinking. Anderson et al., (2007) state that 'action research is best done in collaboration with others who have a stake in the problem under investigation' (p.3). However, like all forms of inquiry it is 'value-laden' as what constitutes improvement is not necessarily self-evident (p.3). A concern for action researchers within education is that each context reflects imposed accountability structures that may or may not reflect the aspirations of the research participants. This was an issue in the case of my research, for example, ES continuously grappled with being accountable to the DfE, Ofsted and the Education Funding Agency (EFA). As one might expect, the vision of the group, and the emerging ethos of the

school, at times contradicted the aims and objectives of such government bodies. Therefore, for the research to reflect the work of ES, it was important to establish an action research framework that primarily respected the values of the group. It is also worth noting that there were other less contradictory influences on ES such as the HSEM and The Cooperative College (2013); both of these organisations support cooperative practices in education and through their schools networks ES garnered advice for the proposal to the DfE.

However, it was the experience of the practitioners involved in the struggle for the new school that shaped the authenticity of this thesis. The desire for the school derived from the recognition of a need and members of ES not wanting to live in contradiction to their values. We believed a contradiction had been imposed on the community by a hierarchical, dominant educational structure; DCC. This structure had at its centre a concern for financial viability, rather than the best interests of the children in Swanage. Therefore, the story of this action research forms a living theory which is validated by ES and which can be tested by the wider educational community in order to promote the concept of individuals and communities being empowered to live in accordance with, rather than contradiction to, their values. However, the desire for the school was not shared by the whole community. There were critics who felt that their own values were being contradicted by our actions. This demonstrates that contradiction was often at the heart of the work of ES and at times made the project's social validity questionable. Yet, acknowledging the role of contradiction justifies living theory as an appropriate methodological approach.

### **The research paradigm in the context of living theory**

As a small-scale action researcher I was faced with a variety of options in terms of methodology. Denscombe (2008, p.4) points out that there is 'no one right decision' but that 'when you have embarked on a particular approach it is not easy to do a U-turn'. The design of the research was therefore the lynchpin to success. The first major step was to establish a 'paradigm' by which I saw my topic (Kuhn, 1996). This is a way of seeing the world or as Kuhn puts it a 'definition of the field' (p.19) where 'shared paradigms result in commitment to the same rules and standards for scientific practice' (p.11).

Paradigmatic thinking argues that the way the researcher sees and interprets the world acts as a prompt in taking action. Kuhn's approach encourages innovative thinking that enables the researcher to explain changes in perception and action that may take place as a result of reflection (p.150). Identification of the paradigm enables the researcher to establish boundaries from which to progress in thinking through the process of action/reflection which in turn leads to changes in perception, interpretation and understanding. For the action researcher these changes will be the result of a cycle whereby actions lead to changes on the basis of reflection.

Lewin, widely accepted as coining the term 'action research', stated that 'research that produces nothing but books will not suffice' (Lewin, 1946, p.35). Whilst I value the importance of books, I agree with Lewin that the significance of action research is that it aims to change practice from the inside, via a cycle of reflection and response. What emerges is a dynamic 'paradigm of praxis' (O'Brien, 2001) that seeks to solve problems and improve practice through the reflective orientation of practitioners rather than academics. Hence, the paradigm of my research was 'praxis'; reflection on current practice within a professional context that leads to change. This concept is the epistemological basis for action research which has the ontological purpose of being 'a family of living inquiry that aims, in a great variety of ways, to link practice and ideas in the service of human flourishing' (Reason and Bradbury, 2008, p.1). Therefore, praxis is the concept that informs my research on an epistemological (knowledge-based) and ontological (being-based) level. The purpose was to discover how values were influential in practice; how knowing and being were entwined, to enable flourishing.

Whereas praxis concerns acting upon one's situation in order to change it, another key concept, 'theory', relates to abstract and conceptualised knowledge, which, in the realm of education, needs testing in practice. The crux of the 'paradigm of praxis' is that both concepts are important because 'knowledge is derived from practice, and practice informed by knowledge, in an ongoing process' (O'Brien, 2012). Therefore, it is the cyclical nature of action research which results in it not merely being about action or practical method but a way of being and doing (praxis). This integrated approach lends praxis to being a paradigm, a way of seeing the world, an orientation within the world; hence action research is not merely a methodology but an orientation that seeks

creativity within communities of inquiry where ‘engagement, curiosity and question posing’ are applied to practical issues (Reason and Bradbury, 2008, p.1).

The significant features of action research suggested that it was an orientation worth pursuing in that it allowed for methodological inventiveness. Nothing is set in stone; rather ‘the intention of the professional informs the process’ (Dadds and Hart, 2001, p.166, p.169). This inventiveness, specifically of living theory, set within a paradigm of praxis, enabled me to be true to my research purposes, therefore it was appropriate to work within the parameters of a method which would respect ‘the right of all to make up their own minds about how to do their research and how to live their lives as they wish, in negotiation with others who wish to do the same’ (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.24). Action research enables ‘synergy between research and practice’ and ‘engages educators in their own research’ in order to create a dynamic relationship ‘between research and change’ (Whitehead, 2012a, p1). These purposes are in line with the objectives of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) to, ‘encourage the pursuit of educational research and its application for both the improvement of educational practice and for the public benefit’ (BERA, 2012). Therefore action research was an appropriate framework for the design, as I sought to discover how my colleagues in ES and myself as an educational practitioner, could improve what we did, in light of the influence of our values, in order to effect change in our community.

However, this was not the only bedrock; the methodology was also influenced by practical theology, as a dialogue partner.

### **Practical theology as a ‘dialogue partner’ in living theory research**

The convergence between action research and practical theology is analysed by Graham who concludes that:

Practical theologians may find common cause with the struggles of action researchers to hold together the difficult demands of generating research that not only seeks to understand a situation, but to transform it. (2013, p.178)

This correlation is not just about change but transformation, according to Graham. She talks about the centrality of values that nurture practice, so that when researchers take part in action research, in partnership with practical theology, they are being ‘attentive’

rather than merely acquiring greater technical skill (p.170). This partnership is about going beyond activism not just to change but to transform; it is about the transformation of our character as much as our agency in the world. Graham argues that it is *phronesis*, practical wisdom, a combination of action and reflection that results in attentive transformation. Therefore, action research, in the form of living theory, and practical theology are inextricably linked in this exploration of the influence of values. Furthermore, there is synergy between this relationship and the explanation of values outlined by Schwartz (1992) and the Common Cause Handbook (PIRC, 2011), whereby the balance between extrinsic and intrinsic values is central to the influence on action that leads to transformation; of ourselves, our relationships and our communities. From a methodological perspective, there is a network of approaches to this research, or as Ganzevoort explains it, there are numerous ‘forks in the road’ (2009).

### **‘Forks in the Road’**

Ganzevoort reflects on ‘the confusion when I started to encounter the myriads of definitions, approaches, themes, motives, and objects of study that all went under the big umbrella of practical theology’ (p.1). He goes on to explain that through a process of ‘tracing the sacred’ (p.5) practical theologians can make sense of the confusing networks of paths, in order to trace their way through their own methodology.

Using Ganzevoort’s approach I was able to ‘trace’ my path through the practical theology forest. This process complemented living theory as both approaches are about making sense of our lived experience. Ganzevoort suggests that there are four meanings to the word ‘tracing’ that have metaphorical significance to the work of the practical theologian; travelling, following, studying and sketching (p.5). He suggests that all practical theology touches on these themes. From my perspective I was definitely a traveller, seeking new meanings and questioning old understandings, trying to ‘travel the realm of the sacred’ (p.5) by allowing myself to be affected by the journey and the people I encountered on the way. Perhaps I was less of a follower, in the traditional sense of discipleship, but I was still inclined to ‘follow’ an innate sense of spirituality to find meaning in the transcendent aspects of life and in the worldly encounters with others.

As for studying, I was interested to discern and analyse patterns of the transcending yet active and passion driven nature of our values that were so central to our work. This might imply that I am on a specific quest to ‘find God’, but as Ganzevoort points out, ‘we never know whether traces we find are traces of God’ (p.6). To me it is not important to specifically look for, or find, God, what is significant in my quest is to find meaning. Regardless of whether or not the ‘traces of the sacred’ are of God, they are innately spiritual in terms of the meaning of encounters with them and the patterns on life those experiences create. Finally, sketching, Ganzevoort suggests that when we ‘sketch’ the sacred we envision and develop a world in which we can live faithfully. By ‘sketching’ the influence of values, it might be possible to construct patterns of action that were faithful to their purpose and meaning, which was particularly useful when they became buried in contradiction. Further to the ‘traces’, Ganzevoort identifies four ‘forks in the road’ to help orientate the practical theologian through the research journey; object, method, praxis and audience.

First, identification of the object or field of study (p.7); ordained ministry, church, faith, religion, culture and society are possible options. Bearing in mind the educational context of my work, society seemed the most appropriate direction. Opting for this path enabled me to analyse all the dimensions whether they had a religious frame of reference or not, for example, this ‘turning’ enabled me to look at the object from a public, social, political or psychological point of view. However, as Ganzevoort points out, if the phenomenon being studied is not explicitly religious, then the ‘reflection needs to be more explicitly religious in order to count as practical theology’ (p.9).

My work is not a traditional view of religion. However, Pargament explains that the ‘myriad definitions of religion reflect the intricacies of religious life’ (1997, p.24). He explains that it is unnecessary to argue for an ultimate definition and suggests that religion is ‘the search for significance in ways related to the sacred’ (p.32). From my perspective, investigating the influence of values is a search for significance in relation to the sacred, in that they are part of a centre to which life gravitates, ‘evoking awe and passion’ (Ganzevoort, 2009, p.3). Pargament’s argument that religion has to do with ‘building, changing, and holding onto the things people care about in ways that are tied to the sacred’ (p.32) is pertinent in looking at the role of the religious dimension of my study. Ganzevoort’s definition of religion as ‘the transcending patterns of action and

meaning embedding in and contributing to the relation with the sacred' is valid as an explanation of how my study relates to religious patterns and hence to the sacred. Therefore, it was justifiable to use this 'forks in the road' framework to trace my methodological approach and to argue that my reflection is explicitly 'religious', in Ganzevoort's sense of 'tracing the sacred'. Therefore, my approach can be called practical theology.

The second fork involves identification of the method. Ganzevoort (2009) explores how praxis functions in the literature about practical theological methodology. He identifies five functions; object, source, *telos*, field and forum. The functions of object, source and *telos* informed my methodology, whereas field and forum are more relevant to explicitly ecclesiastical and theological settings. Praxis as 'object' involves theological tradition as the source of concepts informing the methodology. For example, in Tracy's 'mutual critical correlation' (1981) praxis tests traditional theories. Although I have touched on Tracy's work, praxis as object is not the direction I took because my work is subjective and embedded in lived experience rather than religious tradition. The second function, source, was more useful as it enables interpretation of praxis, which provides the source of the 'material and categories that we need to construct theology' (Ganzevoort, 2009, p.9). Yet, I needed to approach with caution on this route, being careful not to read too much theological significance into the findings and conclusions.

However, praxis as *telos* offered the most direct approach in that it has a specific aim as the focus, a purpose. The praxis is studied with transformation in mind and theology is used to adopt a critical approach to changing reality (p.9). Similarly, Bennett and Graham (2008, p.36) explain that 'influences from theologies of liberation rooted in Freirean pedagogy shaped understandings of practical theology as a form of *phronesis* or practical wisdom'. Therefore Ganzevoort's concept of praxis as '*telos*' resonates with the concept of *phronesis* as it can lead to 'value directed action' (Graham et al., 2005, p183). My work as an educational practitioner and the work of ES travelled in a values-based direction, with an aim (*telos*) of transformation. However, as Ganzevoort warns, this path can lead to arrogance (p.10), especially if construction of change is executed from an 'ivory tower' (p.10). At times ES were accused of arrogance by claiming to represent the whole community of Swanage, therefore making assertions about knowing how to construct and implement transformation needs to be approached cautiously.

The next fork in the road involves the researcher. As Ganzevoort points out there are dialectical connections between the role of participant and observer and it is important for the practical theologian to understand what their role is in the investigation. In relation to identifying my role as a researcher, I am a ‘player’ and a ‘commentator’ in the research context (p.10). As a player, both as an educational practitioner, a member of ES and a practical theologian I felt confident in relating my research to the sacred; I was engaged in developing my spirituality on a personal level as I endeavoured to seek meaning in what I understood the sacred to be. On the other hand I was a commentator, a partisan interpreter of what was happening on the field; I was looking for patterns and forms within the research findings in order to describe action and meaning and suggest strategies for improvement, without interfering too much with the game (p.11).

That leaves the final fork, the audience. To whom am I writing? Strictly speaking my audience are my examiners, but Ganzevoort suggests three wider possibilities, the church, the academy and society. The church is mostly irrelevant to my work, which is not being conducted in that setting. However, the methodological approach in terms of analysing the influence of values may well be relevant to churches. The other two audiences were more apt for my research; the academy and society. Ganzevoort suggests the academy is an appropriate audience for practical theology, particularly so that it does not forfeit its potential ‘to contribute to wider scholarly knowledge’ (2009, p.12). Yet, in contrast, the academy as an audience is a concern to Whitehead and McNiff who suggest that developing ‘ivory tower’ concepts is not the purpose of living theory. Rather than be ‘bullied by dominant forms of research and theory’ it encourages practitioners to ‘think for themselves or participate in public debates’ (2006, p.26). They encourage practitioner researchers to become ‘educational activists’ (p.158) to ensure that others, such as academics or government bureaucrats do not take control of their lives as professionals. They support the concept of practitioners as communities of collaborative enquiry, in order to exert local, national and international influence. Living theory is about ‘transformative potentials’ (p.167) rather than academic discourses that exclude practitioners from developing theory. From my perspective, although I agree with Whitehead and McNiff, as long as Ganzevoort’s point is taken on board, the academy must also be the audience. Thus, these forms of practitioner-based research contribute to scholarly knowledge and are listened to at the ‘highest’ level.



The other audience is society. Ganzevoort relates practical theology that sees society as the audience as being ‘theology from below’ (p.13), recognising the marginalised and supporting their emancipation. He says that this style of theology is a constructive process of building ‘possible worlds’. Similarly, Whitehead and McNiff suggest that living theory enables practitioner action researchers to demonstrate their capacity to contribute, through educational theory, to the formation of the kind of societies that are ‘manifestations of the values that honour and sustain humanity’ (p.167). Theologically these ideas are rooted in forms of liberating practices (liberation theology), and public discourse related to the resistance of oppression (public theology) (Ganzevoort, 2009, p.13). Educationally similar concepts derive from practitioners who are committed to ‘social renaissance’ and ‘communicative action’ (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.167). Therefore, the audience of my research is both the academy and society. They are inter-related and if the research is to have meaning I need to speak to both.

Throughout this section I have traced a methodological path that provides a coherent rationale for the theological perspective of my work, supported by Ganzevoort’s matrix of ‘forks in the road’. There are usually detours and diversions that you cannot predict at the outset of a journey, but there is always a way through the matrix if you are prepared to adapt, keep an open mind and at times, take the ‘path less travelled’ (Frost, 1916). By ‘travelling, following, studying and sketching’ my way through this journey I have created a trace of the sacred in my work as a practical theologian. This theological trace provided a sense of hope that I was travelling in the right direction.

### **Tracing in a hopeful direction**

This trace of the sacred has been explored throughout my professional doctorate journey and I find it an inspiring and motivational direction in which to travel. As I demonstrated in Paper One (Appendix Two), the work of Catholic theologians, Groome (1991) and Veling (1996), helped to explore links between theology and the context of my educational practice. According to Groome, creative imagining illuminates the social responsibilities we share and the consequences of our actions. This sense of responsibility should prompt us to work together for mutual solutions as solidarity creates a liberating impact on the community. Groome believes a conative dialogue must be mutual, ‘participants must have the opportunity to speak their own word and to hear the word of another’ (1991, p.107).

Furthermore, Groome refers to the fulfilment of such characteristics in the context of Habermas's phrase 'communicative competence' (1987 p.107). He recognises competence in community by a lack of personal or strategic interest, akin to Schwartz's (1992) argument in relation to the influence of intrinsic, self-transcendent values. Groome also acknowledges that mutuality exists between participants when 'symbolic interaction of language is free of domination or manipulation and there is no compulsion to agreement other than the persuasiveness and validity claims of a particular position' (p.108). Groome refers to this kind of communicative competence as 'authentic dialogue', an honest and fair conversation among partners in quest of the truth (p.108). There is resonance here with Whitehead and McNiff's focus on communicative action and to Pattison's critical conversation; action and change in community is reliant on the quality of the authenticity of relationships and the clarity in which people speak to each other.

Authentic dialogues and critical conversations are shaped by the 'story of our times' and Groome recognises the past and present are all part of informing our future reality. We live our lives in solidarity and community merely by living our stories together. For Groome the time we shape together gives history a new hopeful direction since hope is linked to the transcendent quality of the Christian story whereby God's desire is 'faith, hope, and love, peace, justice, and freedom, compassion, wholeness, and holiness – the best of everything. And God takes humankind into partnership on behalf of these desires' (Groome, 2002, p.89). The hopeful direction for me as a teacher and ES as a community group was dependent on recognising a link between values and hope. It is rare to find inspiration from politicians; however Obama, in his election victory speech 2012, captured the spirit of what can result from the interaction:

I have always believed that hope is that stubborn thing inside us that insists, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that something better awaits us so long as we have the courage to keep reaching, to keep working, to keep fighting. (Obama, 2012, The Guardian)

Although rhetorical, Obama's words captured the mood of ES at a time when we were trying to keep reaching, working and fighting towards the goal of the school; our values moving us in a hopeful direction. Moreover, practical theologian Pattison states that 'teachers and theologians are artists' (2007, p.204) and that these roles hold 'transformational knowledge' involving 'wisdom, intuition, mystery'. He recognises

that teachers and theologians alike are involved in the messiness of life and that to some extent their training develops skills and habits of wisdom, virtue and reflection. Pattison suggests that some basic questions form the 'horizons' of theological enquiry and can similarly construct a useful critical framework for practitioners and others attempting to 'discern direction for action' (p.207).

Reflection can also help discern an understanding of the complex influence of values in our lives. MacIntyre suggests that we are 'narrative creating creatures', manufacturing meaning through the story of our lives. He thinks that 'it is worth considering stories and narratives as sources for discovering the values that people actually live by rather than those that they theoretically espouse' (1981, p.201). Therefore, the structure of the conceptual framework was designed to enable the research participants to espouse their values through narrative, then reflect and validate the data as a means to overcoming some of the complexity that arises through relativity and subjectivity. Thus, meaning was created through 'hearing' the narrative of the participants who then validated the data by confirming the practical influence of the values they claimed to live by.

### **The conceptual framework**

A conceptual framework is traditionally a 'theoretical overview of your intended research and order within that process' that can also 'bridge theory and practice' (Trafford and Leshem, 2008, p.44). My conceptual framework was based on reflection which Moon defines as a 'basic mental process with either a purpose or an outcome or both' (1999, p.10). The model was a practical tool which provided a conceptual base for data collection and practical reflection.

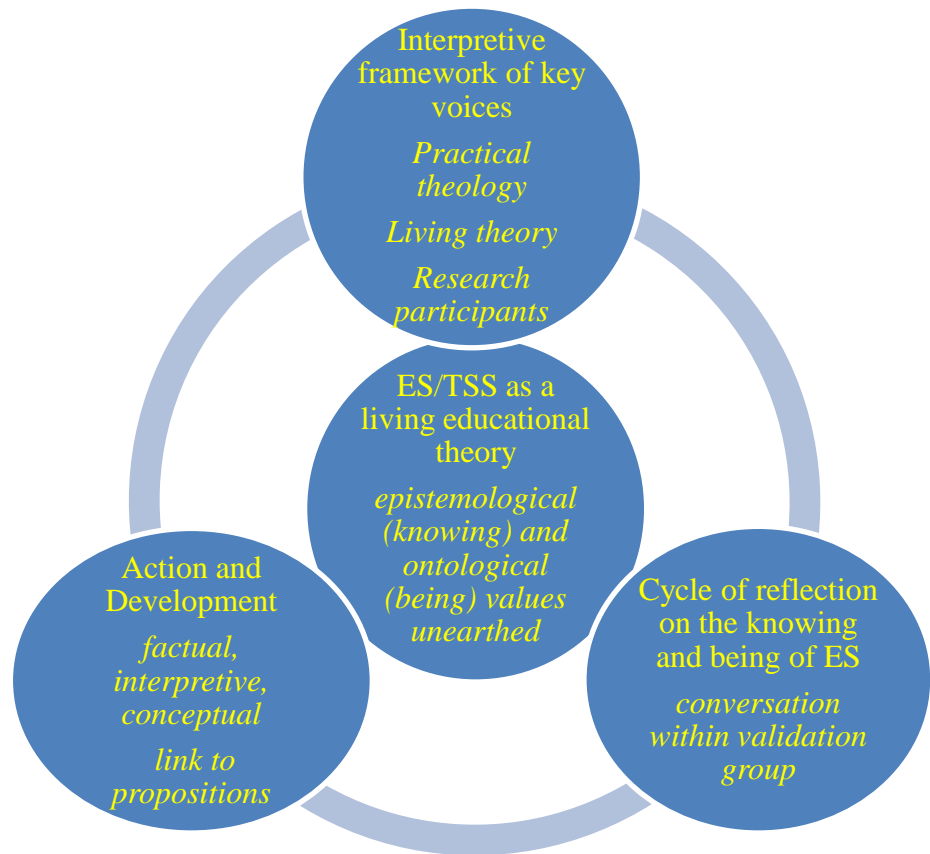


Figure 4.1 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework is represented as a Venn diagram, comprised of three interconnected concepts showing synergy with ES/TSS at the centre, forming a living educational theory. By representing the three outer components overlapping with the centre the diagram demonstrates how the individual concepts integral to the research are parts of a greater whole. Each component is essential to the development of ES/TSS as a living educational theory. This framing of concepts is supported by the work of Senge et al., in their exploration of change at organisational levels (2005). They suggest that action is ‘the by-product of participating more consciously in dialogue with an unfolding universe’ (2005, ch. 11); the parts are inextricably linked to the whole. Therefore, the purpose of the conceptual framework was to provide a holistic scaffold for a methodological approach through which to gather data:

1. An interpretive framework of key voices which included insights from practical theology, living theory and the research participants.
2. An action/reflection cycle to affirm the findings; validation via conversation within the group.

3. Development and realisation of the findings; factual, interpretive and conceptual links to propositions.

### **1. Interpretive framework of key voices**

The conceptual framework provided a pragmatic approach to the methodology. The interpretive framework of key voices infused the research with knowledge about practical theology, living theory and the research participants, which enabled the iterative design of the methods of data collection. However, knowledge collected was not based on 'technical rationality' but on interpretive reading of texts and the voices of practitioners. This knowledge was subjective rather than objective, Polanyi describes this as 'tacit knowledge' (1958), based on a reservoir of experience held by each source. Pauleen and Gorman (2011, p.22) suggest that Polanyi's concept is 'an embodied form of knowledge, a skill, such as riding a bike or playing a musical instrument'. This embodied knowledge encompasses the individual's being and values in a personal rather than purely rational and scientific form. The concepts embedded in the conceptual framework were not only interpretive and interlinked but interdependent, forming a subjective values base. Whitehead and McNiff state that living theory is similarly grounded in value-based knowing where practitioners 'systematically relate their work to their values and draw in those values as standards of judgement by which they evaluate their work' (2006, p.34).

The insights from practical theology outlined earlier in the chapter helped me structure the collection of these epistemologically valid stories from ES, as I 'traced' the development of the methodology. Theology was a key influence, however, this did not presume a faith perspective on the part of myself as the reflector, if this had been the case, trust between me and the participants may have been an issue. Cameron et al., (2010) set the scene for the role of theology in the context of a culture where 'the religious feel vulnerable before secularism; secularists are threatened by the continuing hold of faith'(p.13). This vulnerable balance between secularism and religion often existed within discussions held by ES. The research needed to be capable of holding this tense balance, hence I developed a method that could 'hold' uncertainty whilst also being a tool for critical thinking because I was a 'player' and 'commentator'. In terms of credibility the truth claims of each participant were of equal value, yet lent themselves to contention and dispute within the group. Sometimes this lead to vulnerability of trust,

where participants felt less valued than others, therefore the research required a ‘safety net’ of anonymity in order to respect the validity of each person’s ‘tacit knowledge’. This safety net was present for the interviews and online survey, which are discussed further in the next chapter.

The data collected was presented to a validation group, whereby participants met together to reflect on the information in light of their experiences in ES. This stage of the research was not anonymous, therefore the role of conversation was important in establishing trust. The aim of the group was to enable dialogue and mutual, critical conversation in order to reflect on the research, the work of ES and the influence of values.

## **2. Cycle of reflection – the role of conversation in the validation group**

The purpose of the validation group, using a cycle of reflection, was to enable conversation. Feldman (1999, p.36) states that the ‘conversation process allows the participants the opportunities to develop understanding that can then be used to support decisions about the choice of goals or actions’. Conversation was central to the progress of ES, particularly in the context of conflict and contradiction. Winter (1999, p.182) suggests that there is an ‘epistemological’ crisis of confidence in professional knowledge, arising when we lose trust in the reliability of facts which prove unable to resolve disagreements between opinion and interpretation. He proposes that the answer to this lack of confidence is in developing the artistry of reflection. In the case of ES, this artistry was developed through conversation. Therefore, the reflective practitioner is important in that they are able to understand their underlying subjectivity in the context of a particular situation which is always ‘an act of interpretation’ (p.183). In order to avoid an ‘epistemological crisis’ I set out to gather reliable facts that would confidently relate to the research question. This involved establishing the validation group to affirm or challenge, through reflective, critical conversation, the findings, from which I could begin to shape some conclusions and summative propositions.

The validation group’s reflection on the findings was in turn a mirror of the process ES had used throughout the project. Our work involved a continual process of reflection on the evolving nature of creating the school. This kind of reflection is essential to the development of a living theory and values lie at its core. Living in accordance with

values by creating 'virtuous' cycles of reflection, enables the educational practitioner to dispel the negativity of contradiction, through praxis. However, this is not without issues. Those involved in the process of virtuous reflection will often disagree with each other and flourishing will be relative to each person's experience of life. Finding a collective way forward in developing a values base for the school was challenging, therefore the aim of the validation group was to affirm or challenge how the values engrained within ES, revealed through the interviews and survey, acted as living influences on the development of the school as reflective agents of change.

An action reflection cycle is the process of reflecting on learning thus producing new theory which subsequently feeds back into new practice. A cycle of reflection emerges from the question 'how can I improve what I am doing?' (Whitehead, 2012b). ES continually asked this question in the pre-opening phase of the school and action reflection cycles were grounded in the values of the group. By discussing the findings with my colleagues I was able to listen to values being espoused, a process which contained its own 'energy flow' of reflection. Listening to the recordings of the conversation during the validation session enabled me to reflect on the values of ES as 'living forms' (Whitehead, 2012c); the stories I recorded were in harmony with the reflective process of founding the school. The values espoused by the group were the 'explanatory principles' (Whitehead, 2012a); explanations of educational influence which created a state of 'accordance' between the values of the group and the proposed practices of the school. Similarly, the affirmations of the validation group were in accord between the research findings and the experience of ES.

The concept of 'energy flow' was an important element of reflection and stimulated further resonance with theology in relation to the purposes of a living theory methodology. Whitehead feels affirmed by theological influences in terms of 'energy flowing through the cosmos' (Whitehead, 2012c, p.114). He cites Tillich's words, associating this energy with 'the state of being affirmed by the power of being itself' (Tillich, 1962). Although Whitehead has 'no theistic desires' he believes that when such an energy flow combines with his values this provides him with explanatory principles to explain why he does what he does. He compares this synergy to Mandela's Ubuntu (You Tube, 2013) and 'spiritual resilience gained through connection with a loving dynamic energy' (Whitehead, 2012c, p.114). I connect it to Ganzevoort's concept of

‘tracing the sacred’ and the explanation of values provided by Schwartz (1992) and the authors of *The Common Cause Handbook* (2011). This life affirming energy and synergy with values was at the very core of the explanatory principles of ES. Despite members of the group coming from very diverse backgrounds, belief systems and cultural heritage, we found a relational dynamic that enabled the explanatory principles of what we were doing to affirm why we were doing it; we traced the sacred form of our energy flow in explaining how intrinsic values influenced our work towards our common cause.

This ‘sacred’ energy, which evoked awe and passion, contains a practical wisdom that lies at the heart of action research. Carr and Kemmis (1986, p.43) contend that as a critical approach it can ‘inform and develop a critical theory of education’. They propose that it can provide an openness to critical discussion and debate. This approach requires a ‘critical community of professionals’ (p.44) in order to carry out the task of informing a theory. Similarly this research engaged a community of practitioners in critical reflection to enhance confidence in delivery of practice that related to the school, using the traditional action/reflection cycle, with an energy flow of practical wisdom embedded into the process.

Action reflection through the validation group was a significant part of the conceptual framework and empathy on behalf of the research participants, was required. Veling (2005, p.5) uses German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s concept of ‘a forgetfulness of being’ to suggest an abandonment of self is necessary in order to focus the lens elsewhere, on the other. This appreciation of the other was a crucial element of the proposed model of reflection in that all practitioners should have parity of esteem and an equal right to be heard, whatever their outlook. Furthermore, rather than entering into the process of reflection with a preconceived idea of imposing one’s own preference for change on the others in the team, the intention was to provide the group with confidence that one voice will not be dominant over and above another. However, this is a utopian view particularly in a group of head-strong, determined people. Therefore, at the validation group stage I ensured that participants were given equal status and that the opportunity to speak was equitable; grounding the methodology in sound reflective practice and enabling conversation was essential. This was achieved by explaining the



purpose of the meeting and establishing that each person's right to speak as part of our cycle of reflection was valid.

The reflective cycle is well established in theological practice, as described by Ballard and Pritchard (2006). It involves observation of a situation, analysis of the observation, reflection and planning a new course of action (p.71). Pattison's (1989) adapted model of the pastoral cycle, which he describes as a 'mutual critical conversation' is adapted by Swinton and Mowat (2006, p.81, see fig.2) into a cycle of reflection that made a valuable contribution to the conceptual framework.

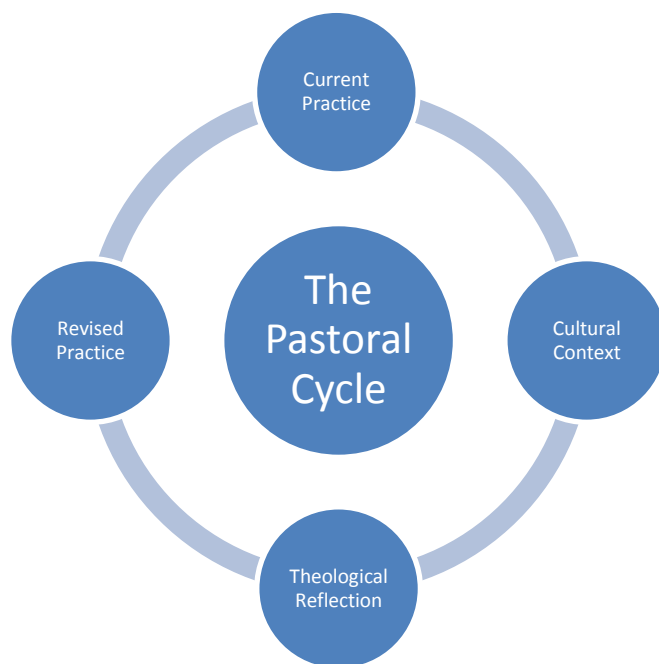


Figure 4.2 A mutual critical conversation (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.81)

Elements of reflection are linked to each other in a cyclical manner. The cycle begins with an example of professional practice which is reviewed in light of its cultural context. In the case of ES the validation group reviewed the influence of values, set within the cultural context of the school project. However, a distinction emerges in relation to the next part of the cycle whereby the validation group was not specifically reflecting theologically, in the more traditional sense as espoused by Swinton and Mowat. However, taking Ganzevoort's interpretation as a guide, it is possible to claim that they were reflecting on the sacred in the sense that the influence of values was a centre around which their lives gravitated.

In this sense the validation group were in a ‘mutual critical conversation’ in relation to encounters with intrinsic values that had wider significance than ES in terms of their impact on society; in other words, their impact was on ‘revised practice’. Taking figure 4.2 as a whole, the central element of the ‘pastoral cycle’ demonstrates that whether or not practitioners are reflecting on practice in church or schools, the reflective conversation will relate to and have an impact on ‘pastoral’ practice. In the case of ES this meant our reflective, cyclical conversation within the validation group was pastoral in the sense that we had care of each other and the project we were involved in to the extent that our mutual critical conversation had the potential to impact on and improve practice; the pastoral theological cycle can be taken beyond the bounds of the traditional setting to have an impact on other cultural and societal contexts in relation to the sacred influence of self-transcending values.

### **3. Development and realisation of the findings**

The third concept of the framework was the development and realisation of the findings in the form of factual, interpretive and conceptual conclusions (Trafford and Leshem, 2008, p.140). How could the influence of values shape propositions to be tested by ourselves and others? This concept of creating propositions from the critical conversation can be equated to ‘craftmanship’, as distinct from ‘artistry’. Whereas art refers to the aesthetic and theoretical, craft relates to practical application, a ‘hands-on’ approach. The reflective practitioner is not only capable of existing in a fluid dynamic cycle but is deemed to be a craftsperson, according to Schön (1991, p.49). He states that perceptions become too grounded in what are seen as ‘objective’ facts and argues that professional work is not centred on such facts but in complexity, uncertainty and instability. The proposal he makes is that professionalism should be focused on reflection in practice as a form of craft rather than a method of rational technicality. In order to unearth and see the influence of values as driving forces for social transformation educational activists need to be craftsmen and craftswomen; building foundations but not necessarily dictating the whole structure. By crafting factual, interpretive, conceptual conclusions and shaping propositions about how values influenced the transformation of practice as the school project evolved, the research shaped and affirmed emerging patterns from the data.

The strategy outlined in this chapter explains how my approach influenced the design of the research in identifying the aim and purpose of the investigation, when, where and how the research was to be conducted and who the research participants would be.

### **Summary**

Throughout this chapter I have traced a route which provides an explanation of how my research approach was informed by practical theology and living theory. The framework presented provides an overarching explanation of the process in order to establish a conceptual thread from the research question, to the conceptualisation of values and the sacred, through to the contextual background and the methodology and onto the data collection stage. This has involved some degree of weaving (tracing) in and out of theories and ideas; however, in conclusion, the intention has been to present the conceptual basis of the research in a systematic yet inventive and imaginative way.

This chapter has laid the foundation of a philosophical and technical methodological framework that resulted in data being collected, which was validated from a critical and ethical perspective. The thread running from Chapter Two, through this chapter and on to the next, is the process of discovering the influence of values as standards of judgment in relation to building the foundations of the school. The next chapter explains how that thread is picked up in the transmission of methodological concepts to practical methods of data collection, in the form of semi-structured interviews, an online survey and the validation group.

## **CHAPTER FIVE - RESEARCH METHODS**

### **Introduction**

In order to secure the validity of the research, three rigorous methods were established, based on the conceptual framework:

1. Semi-structured interviews.
2. Online survey.
3. Validation group.

The function of the research design must demonstrate how the conceptual framework influences the 'choice of methods as data collection techniques' (Trafford and Leshem, 2008, p.108). Therefore this chapter explains how and why the data collection methods were chosen in order to link the conceptual framework to the research design.

### **Data collection**

Whitehead states that data collection needs to address two questions:

1. What data am I going to gather to enable me to make a judgment about the educational influences in learning of what I am doing in relation to my values, skills and understanding?
2. In explaining my educational influences in my own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of social formations what explanatory principles and theoretical frameworks do I use? (Whitehead, 2008, p.5)

Data from the interviews and survey was collected between September 2011 and 2012. The validation group met in July 2013. The methods chosen enabled me to collect data in the initial stages (interviews and survey) which could then be presented for discussion to the validation group. In the framework of living theory the data can include written, graphic and multimedia information, as long as ethical frameworks are adhered to and collection methods are not manipulative. I followed the ethics procedure for Anglia Ruskin University, gaining consent via letters from my participants (Appendix Seven). My ethics application was approved in May 2011.

A Dictaphone was used to record interviews and the validation group meeting. The recordings and transcripts were stored on files on a password protected computer. The survey was designed on Survey Monkey (2013) and the data was stored in a password protected computer file. Microsoft OneNote was used as a means to record findings and write up transcripts. Content analysis identified themes and core categories from the

initial semi-structured interviews and survey, linked back to the conceptual framework and forward to the validation group.

The methods of data collection were qualitative, diverse and dependent on the educational influences I was attempting to understand. The diversity of method provided an element of 'triangulation of data to avoid the reliance on one method of data collection' (Whitehead, 2008). Analysis was therefore inductive, moving from the data to the theory (Denscombe, 2008, p.288). The following sub-sections explain why and how each method was chosen and used.

### **1. Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a method because they provided an informal opportunity to explore key themes related to the role of values and their influence on our work. Although members of ES met regularly, it was rare to have time to discuss specific themes in detail. The interviews provided me with this opportunity, which in turn produced data that could be further explored through the online survey. In this sense the data collection process was iterative and moved from the general to the specific.

The interviews took place between September and December 2011. All 14 people who were members of ES at the time were invited, by email, to be interviewed. Ten colleagues agreed to participate, which was 70% of the group. At this point TSS had been approved and ES had moved to the pre-opening phase of the free school process. This provided an opportunity for me to conduct interviews as we considered how we would re-establish the group in order to open the school in September 2013. The interviews took place in the participants' houses, at evening time. They were recorded on a Dictaphone and subsequently transcribed onto OneNote. The transcriptions were not word for word but attempted to capture the meaning of what each participant was saying. This method is open to criticism as a verbatim approach to transcription may be a truer reflection of what participants said, however, the aim of the research was to gather overall themes and categories in the attempt to discover the influence values had. The findings from this stage were later authenticated by the online survey and validation group. Each participant's notes were coded anonymously into themes according to the

research questions. In the write up of the findings in Chapter Five the interviewees are coded by letters A-J.

The interview questions (Appendix Eight) were informal although the same approach was taken in each interview, using a base of five themes related to values; definition of values, examples of core values, influences on values, contradiction of values and the relevance of values in the context of ES.

The degree of freedom in asking subsequent questions helped probe and prompt the interviewee. Oppenheim (1992, p.65) states that 'no other skill is as important to the research worker as the 'ability to conduct good interviews'. He explains that interviews can be used for many different purposes; therefore it is important to make the right choice of interview style. According to his terminology my interviews were 'exploratory' as they were not an ordinary conversation even though they may have resembled one. They were also designed to engage the participants and motivate them to take part, rather than create too formal an environment which may have deterred them from participating.

Despite the interviews giving the impression of being informal and conversational, Denscombe states that 'although there are a lot of superficial similarities between a conversation and an interview, interviews are actually something more than just a conversation' (2008, p.173). Interviews with a research purpose involve a set of assumptions and understandings; ethical consent is required, participants must acknowledge that information is used to write up the research and agendas for interviews are set by the researcher (p.173-174). The interviews conducted for this research assisted me in gaining insights from individuals into the influences of learning on their values. They were established on a three-fold process and it was important to follow ethical guidelines as set out by the university in order for participants to feel safe and comfortable in taking part. The interviews involved delving deeply into opinions, feelings and experiences; therefore confidentiality and privacy were important factors in deciding to use this method, particularly at the start of the process.

The interviews enabled flexibility so the interviewee could elaborate on points of interest (Denscombe, 2008, p.177) and data was used to establish themes to investigate

further through the online survey. Although interviews are time consuming and data analysis is more complex due to the non-standard nature of the responses given, they provided depth and insight into the issues I was researching. The data was rich in validity in the sense that information was derived directly from the interviewees and was therefore credible and trustworthy. However, the subjectivity of the research may have hampered the reliability of the outcomes, both in analysis and in collection of data, because I carry my own bias and preconceived ideas of the work of ES and my role within it. Furthermore the inhibitions of the interviewees, coupled with the intrusion into their private thoughts and feelings may have skewed the outcomes of the data. However, the therapeutic effect of taking part in an interview can be rewarding, particularly when set within the living theory context, as participants had an opportunity to reflect and discuss their values without being interrupted or criticised (p.203).

Another advantage of interviews as a research method is that they are high in reliability as they convey a direct response from each participant. On the other hand, there is a degree of unreliability as the participant may respond in a way to please the interviewer, or may have a vested interest in responding in a certain way which masks the truth of a given situation. However, although the information from the interviews is open to interpretation and lacks some credibility, it is valid. The validity comes from the authenticity of the accounts and the affirmation of findings through the online survey and the validation group, in the subsequent stages of the research.

## **2. Online survey**

The survey was conducted via Survey Monkey in the autumn of 2012. The aim was to consolidate the data arising from the semi-structured interviews. Once the data had been organised into themes the survey was created to enable the entire membership of ES, by then 18 people, including the original interviewees, to participate anonymously. The survey was emailed to the participants and 13 people completed it, 12 in its entirety and one partially. In the write up in Chapter Five the respondents are coded by numbers (R1-R13).

The survey comprised ten questions, focused on six core themes (Appendix Nine). OneNote was used to collate the data, identifying new themes and categorising the information into strands which formed the basis of discussion at the validation group.

A survey is a research tool which enables data to be presented for analysis. Unlike with interviews the researcher is able to analyse specific responses which are based on exactly the same set of questions (Denscombe, 2008, p.153). This allows for consistency and provides a standardised set of data. The role of the survey was to collect opinions and attitudes relating to the influence of values, rather than facts. Thus, the majority of questions were open, enabling the participant to make unrestricted comments. However, four questions required a short answer or asked the participants to select responses from a pre-written list. Such questions provided more objective responses regarding definitions and types of values.

The survey was advantageous in that it enabled participants to comment anonymously and participate when they felt they had time, rather than having to arrange a time to meet with an interviewer. The questions were consistent and standard therefore the data was less likely to be affected by ‘interpersonal’ information (p.169), whereby a respondent is more likely to be influenced by wanting to respond in a way in which the researcher is hoping for or expects. On the other hand, the disadvantages were that the pre-coded questions may have frustrated participants and deterred them from answering, or the questions may have included bias or loading that presented a false set of results. Furthermore, a survey does not present the researcher with an opportunity to check the truthfulness of the answers; therefore the data may be less reliable than a face-to-face interview (p.171).

The survey questions were designed to build on the findings of the interviews in order to identify further information about the values of members of ES. Question One asked participants to define the term ‘values’, whereas Question Two asked if they agreed with specific definitions previously given by the interviewees. The same process was used in Questions Three and Four whereby initially the participants were asked to list up to five personal values, before selecting from a list derived from the interviews. Similarly Question Five asked participants to explain key factors that had influenced their values whereas Question Six required them to select from a list of influences that had arisen from the interviews. This process enabled the original data to be consolidated and expanded so that the interviews established initial findings which formed the structure of the second layer of data from the survey.



The anonymity of the survey helped provide honest and more open answers as the respondent was less likely to be concerned about giving the ‘right’ answer or restricting their comments because they were worried about disclosing sensitive information. Therefore the responses to open questions, such as Questions Seven and Eight, enabled participants to state their views and feelings frankly. Having said that, bearing in mind the group is relatively small, there may have been some reserve in the responses, depending on the respondent’s relationship with me. Respondents may have been influenced by my role as the researcher and could have given a certain answer in response to that role, such as a response they might have thought would please my perspective on a particular issue, or a response that in their opinion might provoke a certain response from me.

The final two questions in the survey enquired about the respondent’s views on contradiction of and congruence with values and individual’s involvement and influence in ES. These questions were a new line of enquiry, building on information from the interviews. By the time of the survey we had been working on the pre-opening phase for a year. Therefore, the final questions elucidated important information regarding how each respondent saw their own influence within the group, particularly in relation to how their values responded to contradiction and congruence.

An outline of each question and the corresponding responses in Chapter Five provides a thorough basis from which to analyse and reflect on the findings in light of the research question; how did the values of ES influence the pre-opening phase of TSS? For most questions a ‘Wordle’ image is included in the findings chapter (Chapter Five). The images provide a visual map of the words in the online responses, the more often a word occurs in the survey data, the more prominent it is in the image. The word ‘values’ occurs most frequently and not unexpectedly as this is the focus of the research. However, reflecting on the relationship between the word ‘values’ and other prominent words provides an interesting and visual point from which to reflect on the findings.

### **3. Validation group**

The analysis of qualitative data must be convincing to demonstrate that it has been grounded in a rigorous process. Mason suggests that producing a convincing explanation relies on ‘the reliability and accuracy of method; validity of data and

generalizability of analyses' (Mason, 1996, p.145). However, she argues there is no specific blueprint for a qualitative analytical approach and concludes that the researcher must make decisions and frame analysis based on:

[t]he research questions, the philosophical and methodological posture which they encapsulate, the way you have designed your project to support these, and the realities of the research process which you have pursued. (p.162)

Thus, the emphasis of my analysis, in relation to validity and reliability, was based on how I designed my research, through a living theory methodological lens. Certain forms of qualitative research benefit from a 'Delphi style' approach, whereby group communication enables individuals to address complex issues based on summaries of previous rounds of data collection (Linstone and Turuf, 1979). It is not possible to verify qualitative research in a scientific and objective way; however, using a validation method provides reassurance that the research was credible. Denscombe refers to this process as 'respondent validation' (2008, p.297), whereas in Whitehead and McNiff's living theory model this form of affirmation is referred to as a 'validation group'.

Whereas personal validation takes the form of self-evaluation and critical reflection (Polanyi, 1958), social validity usually takes the form of 'meeting with critical friends and validation groups' (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p103). However, Mason is cautious about such an approach, suggesting that research subjects may not be in a position of 'epistemological privilege', thus not able to make a valid judgement of the interpretation the researcher has made (Mason, 1997, p.152). However, the living theory method mitigates this critique in that the purpose of the validation group is to affirm or challenge the appropriateness of the interpretations of the researcher in order for them to progress onto the next stage of the investigation, rather than make a judgement on the actual interpretation and conclusions.

Therefore, the task of the validation group was to meet to review, affirm or challenge progress. The purpose of the meeting was for the group to be informed of the story of the research, evaluate evidence related to values as standards of judgement and 'assess the quality of the claim to knowledge so far' (p.103). Whitehead and McNiff state:

The responsibilities of members of a validation group are to listen carefully, to assess the quality of the claim to knowledge, in relation to the evidence produced and the clarity and acceptability of the standards of judgement, and to agree or disagree that the work demonstrates sufficient merit to go forward to the next stages. (2006, p.103)

All members of ES were invited to attend the validation group via email in June 2013. Five people responded to say they would like to participate. This number represented a third of the membership of ES at that point and each person was given specific information about the date, time and duration of the meeting, a week in advance. The meeting was held on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2013. Members of ES were accustomed to meeting in each other's homes, so it was appropriate to welcome them to my home for the purpose of the validation group. It was an evening meeting and I provided soft drinks and some food in order for people to feel comfortable and at ease. The meeting lasted for one hour and 45 minutes. The discussion was recorded on a Dictaphone and later transcribed onto OneNote. The event was established as an informal meeting and the intention was to create a relaxed atmosphere where people could reflect and talk openly.

### **Analysis of data**

As Denscombe suggests, the analysis of the data involved several stages; preparation, familiarity, interpretation, verification and representation (2008, p.288). The first two research methods, the interviews and survey, were coded by theme or type of question. The data was categorised for discussion at the third stage, the validation group. There was a relationship between the coding of the themes and questions and the categories presented at the validation group. The synthesis of the data identified key themes in order to frame interpretive and conceptual discussions and formulate summative propositions, to be presented in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Decisions had to be taken about which parts of the data were important, based on the degree of relevance to the research question. Denscombe suggests finding congruence between categories and themes to allow some to be merged (p.293). As the analysis developed, alongside the data collection, themes were merged in order to reach conceptual conclusions. The disadvantage of such an approach is that the interpretations and conclusions may be over reliant on the researcher's perspective and bias (p.310), which is why it is important to identify specific aspects of the discourse being studied;

in this case I was searching for evidence of the influence of values. Furthermore, as the data collection developed I searched more deeply into the participant's views on the role of contradiction in the influence of values.



Figure 5.1 Research methods timeline

### Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the data collection methods. The rationale for the methods is explained by way of advantages and disadvantages of the approaches used, whilst at the same time justifying the choices made. The next chapter outlines the findings of the research which are presented in order of the data collection process.

## **CHAPTER SIX - FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings and aims to get beneath the surface of ES to explore which values emerged and how they were influential. It examines the values ‘unearthed’ and how they operated, in order to go beyond the assumed ideals that derived from external influences such as HSEM. However, the degree of congruence between the values of the group and HSEM requires further analysis, which is explored further in Chapters Seven and Eight. The analysis of the data begins to indicate how the values of ES were influential in the work of the group and in creating a new living educational theory. However, the findings do not present one clear-cut set of values that are shared between the individuals within ES. As Pattison states (2004, p.1), ‘the notions of value and values can easily slip, chameleon-like, between users and utterances’ and this is evidenced in the references to values that are presented in the findings chapter, which include ambiguity and contradiction.

### **The nature of qualitative findings**

The findings presented in this chapter are qualitative in nature in that they provide a rich description of a complex project. Qualitative research is a dynamic and creative process which enables thinking to emerge and evolve (Richardson, 1990). This project had a long history and, as the story unfolded, many characters were involved. The narrative, told through conversation and interpretation of dialogue, enabled findings to emerge which were tested for authenticity. The process is not merely a summary of facts and accounts to arrive at specific preconceived conclusions, rather it is part of action research; as I write I ‘unearth’ what I am trying to say. In the course of our work ES spent many hours writing; emails, reports, speeches, proposals and Facebook posts. These writings were often unplanned in advance but were parts of conversations between colleagues and sometimes with critics. Thus, writing became a tool for learning; a process that helped self-understanding and developed empathy with others, as we tried to work out how to improve our practices. Furthermore, it is important to give voice to criticism and one of the key elements of the research was to explore how values influenced responses to conflict and contradiction.

The findings are presented in order to validate how values influenced the development of educational theory. External support from organisations such as HSEM and The

Cooperative College confirmed that our work was grounded in sound educational values, however, our critics, such as the local representative of the National Union of Teachers and a specific member of staff at the nearest LA School, disagreed, so conflict and contradiction were never far away. Whilst it is acceptable to differ, one of the key reasons for publishing this research is to illuminate how national politics and local community action cannot be judged as necessarily collaborating with each other in terms of living in accordance with values. It is possible that one can disagree with national policy yet still utilise it, or even subvert it, in order to engage in meaningful community action to improve education at a local level.

Unearthing the influence of values of ES gives voice to a group of people attempting to protect the rights of young people within a specific Swanage community, in order for them to learn in their home town, to no detrimental effect on any other children. Therefore, this work has purpose, *telos*, beyond the remit of academia. I want this study to be performative, persuasive and powerful. It is about transformation, and is presented in a way that others can learn from it. Therefore, despite the conundrum and apparent contradiction the free school policy placed us in and regardless of being criticised by local authorities and unions alike, I believe, and my colleagues in ES believe, that it was right to give children the opportunity to be educated and nurtured within the community in which they live, thereby creating an inextricable link between home, community and school. Therefore, these findings are not facts or objective measures that emerged from a scientific research process; they are significant expressions of people's opinions, beliefs, attitudes and values, told as stories from within a purposeful living community.

## **Findings**

### **Semi-structured interviews**

The following sections summarise the findings for each theme deriving from the interviews. Participant's responses are sub-divided into core categories; Themes One to Six.

#### **Theme One - The definition of 'values'/what is a value?**

The participants were asked to define the meaning of the term 'values'. A common response, for example, by A and I was that a value is something that informs and guides choices, a decision-making tool. A, B and E expanded on this idea in order to relate

values to an ethical standpoint; something which is ‘morally sound’. Another common thread, mentioned by B, C and F was that values relate to behaviour and interaction with others and the world on a daily basis; values are about ‘how you treat people’. G identified a value as ‘a belief, rather than knowledge’, whilst C linked the definition to Buddhist belief, ‘what goes around comes around’. H and D stated that a value is more than a belief as it also has practical benefit.

Values were also described by way of a metaphor: ‘A value is a yardstick’ said D. Others defined values by way of a comparison, for example, E and G considered that a value is ‘not exactly principle’, ‘principles are more set whereas values involve interaction, they are flexible, they can change and vary between people, but they are still equally valid’.

Although B felt that a value is indefinable, he also believed it is recognisable ‘you know it when you see it’. In contrast, J explained that a value is tangible, reflecting ‘who you are’, furthermore it is something which cannot be devalued and emotions such as love, passion or anger are reflected in our values. B and J concurred with each other expressing that a value is something that is true to a person, ‘the things you hold dear, when you take away the material side of life what is left is the truth, your values’. On the other hand, F and G sensed that values are pragmatic; more to do with the way we choose to live our lives, something we have control over and on which we can decide.

## **Theme Two - Core values**

The second theme identified core values. Approximately 20 values emerged from the interview conversations which are grouped in the following categories:

- a. Relationships with others – love (D, J), charity (D), caring (E), friendship (E), loyalty (E), trust (E, H), community and community cohesion (A, D, H), respect for others (E), honesty (E, H) and manners (H);
- b. Peace, harmlessness and vegetarianism (A);
- c. Encouragement – to do one’s best and to make one’s own decisions (B);
- d. Wider political concepts – freedom of speech (C) and independence (I);
- e. Family life – being an active parent (F), knowing children well as a parent (F);
- f. Simplicity (G).

Predominantly participants focused on intrinsic values which involve interaction with others, either on a personal level or within the community.

### **Theme Three - Influences on values**

The participants were asked to explain what and/or who had influenced their values.

This gave rise to an extensive list of influences:

1. Parents (B, C, H, F, E, A, D);
2. School/teachers (B, D, B, J, I, C, E);
3. Books (A, C, F, G);
4. Inspirational people (A, E);
5. Theology (B);
6. Politics of parent (D);
7. Politics in general (B);
8. Observation of how others behave (F);
9. Religious upbringing (B);
10. Brownies (C);
11. Youth club (C);
12. Church youth club (F);
13. The inter connectivity of the world (J);
14. Television (G).

### **Theme Four - Contradiction of values**

A fourth theme to emerge was the concept of contradiction of values. Most prominently, many of those interviewed commented on how the DCC review of schools had contradicted their values. Participant A expressed that the expectation for children to travel 20 miles to school and back contradicted his concern about the environment. Likewise, the separation of children from their homes causes disconnection, which is harmful to children as it teaches them not to value their community. A also felt that there was a lack of equality of opportunity for parents to choose their child's school if they are not privileged, if they cannot afford to pay for private education or the child is not academically gifted enough to attend a grammar school in Poole or Bournemouth. D said that his frustration with the Purbeck Review had caused him to become involved with ES. G explained that his frustration was based on the premise that DCC only considered the financial viability of schools and not the impact on the wider community



when one closes. G also expressed annoyance that DCC never said they understood the situation in Swanage and explained that there was an obvious contradiction between the complexity of the review and the simplicity of the solution for the town.

Some participants made comments about the contradiction of values in general. B in particular expressed that most values involve compromise in order for them to be put into action and that in reality having influence on a situation lessens the impact of contradictions. D focused on the reality of living up to one's values in that it is not always possible to do so due to all people being selfish. Whilst J felt that although she wanted to live up to her values, she was failing to do so. C felt frustrated with life outside ES, particularly in the workplace. She felt that values are most commonly contradicted when people do not have the opportunity to discuss issues when working together by sharing conversations as the way to resolve conflict. E reiterated this point by saying she felt uncomfortable in the workplace due to the contradiction of values which has set a benchmark for her own practice and thinking about the school project.

Contradictions related to working within ES also emerged from the interviews. D identified that although the group had a common interest in setting up the school it did not have a completely common purpose. He also felt that some people within the group were more forceful than others, which at times led to frustration. F explained a contradiction between when the group made progress and when it became bogged down in lengthy discussions about certain 'fluffier' issues. She believed this contradiction arose because ES was partly business-led and partly a philosophically minded group. This insight was aligned with the thinking of I, who explained that if there is a 'disconnect' between personal values and organisational values there is a lack of congruence which causes contradiction. He also felt that this was caused by focusing on external influences rather than on our shared values. A final contradiction to surface from the initial interviews was related to the national free school policy. G felt that the free school movement was at odds with our values; putting 'the whole thing on dodgy ground, what if Gove<sup>4</sup> cuts the ribbon?'

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Gove MP, then Secretary of State for Education

### **Theme Five - Is a value a concept or is it practical?**

Throughout the interviews it was important to grasp the participants' understanding of the concept of values. Several of the interviewees reflected on whether they understood values to be merely conceptual or both conceptual and practical; a concept that could be put into practice. Thoughts varied on this topic, with one participant feeling that it is hard to put values into practice when they are out of context. C felt that a value can only be put into practice when they are contextualised, for example, when someone is acting out of conscience. Participant A felt that values are conceptual but practical if necessary; conceptual ideas also instruct. On the other hand J expressed that values are concepts that evolve and grow, being put into practice if useful. For example, if love is a value it is useful because you cannot love others before you love yourself. Another participant, D, felt that values can be both practical, for example, act as 'yard sticks' for behaviour, and yet can be more abstract, for example, emotional or intellectual or beliefs.

Some interviewees focused on the practical quality of values. For example, B stated that all values are lived out through influence but not imposed. E explained that values are practical in the sense of indicating when someone has 'fallen short', in other words they are a measure to weigh up how true one is being to values. Participants F, G, H and I concurred with this sentiment whilst F felt that people are happier when living in line with their values. G expressed how values are practically useful in terms of how we live, for example, deciding whether or not to have a car or on what to spend money. For H values mould decisions in everyday life; hence they are useful and practical. Finally, I explained how a 'triangle' between 'espoused', 'personal' and 'in use' values acts as a test for the practical use of values in that there is tension when there is disagreement or lack of congruence.

### **Theme Six - Work with Education Swanage**

The final theme emerging from the semi-structured interviews was the reason why participants had become involved in the ES group. The reasons were many and varied, predominantly focusing on the unfairness and frustration felt in response to the Purbeck Review of Schools, which was mentioned by A, E, D and J. Participant J expressed that she felt 'downtrodden and helpless' in light of the proposed changes to education in Swanage and that her involvement in ES was to show that it is possible to 'stand up and

fight, prove negative people wrong, that there is potential if we push ourselves'. Some participants, such as G and H had been involved in the campaigns to 'save' their children's first schools, so fighting for a secondary school was an extension to that work; setting up a school seemed like a better alternative to schools closing.

Participant I became involved from a more positive starting point, wanting to make a contribution to the local community; expressing that the town of Swanage is 'a wonderful place to learn', whilst B felt a school would make it more 'vibrant'. Similarly F and E felt that it was a good idea to have a school in Swanage, to enable children to flourish in the town which is important in its own right.

Some interviewees became involved in order to live more in accordance with personal values, for example, one participant explained that her involvement was as an extension of her interest in the Transition Movement, which encourages local resilience within communities. A wanted to bring about change to 'improve something that could be so much better' and acknowledged that with that desire to bring about change came a sense of not only responsibility but self interest in wanting to provide a better educational provision for his own children.

### **Online survey**

Findings from the survey are presented in order of the questions. Respondents are numbered R1-R13. Wordle images representing questions 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 are included at the beginning of the respective section to emphasise the key words and phrases emerging from the survey responses.

## Question One

**Please can you define what the word 'values' means to you?**



Figure 6.1 Wordle image representing Question One

R1, 2 and 4 alluded to the deterministic nature of values. R1, 2, 4 and 11 commented on the influence they have on behaviour and the authority they hold over those with whom we associate. R2, 5, 6 and 8 said that values are a major part of decision making, often operating from the subconscious, R2 stated, ‘when I make important and particularly difficult decisions I refer to my values often consciously but they are now so ingrained, unconsciously’. Similarly, R1 felt that values are engrained, they ‘run through you to your core - like rock’.

R10 differentiated between personal and institutional principles as guides to behave in a certain way, stating that values can be something subconscious on a personal level or a set of values which might be written down and ‘adhered to at an institutional level’. Values were also likened to ‘conscience inside your head’, by R11, who said that they are acted out ‘in practical ways as ideals that an individual or organisation aims for, which, if achieved, provides benefit to a group or community’.

R2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 deemed values to be important, as deeply held beliefs used to determine actions, decisions and judgements and to define what is important in terms of how one lives one's life. R4 referred to them as 'aspirations', whilst R6 deemed values to be given the 'highest priority when making decisions about how to live'. R9 expanded on the concept of values forming part of one's belief system in that they 'form

the individual's holistic baseline, which can be nurtured and evolved, or left to be neglected, depending on the individual's outside influences, be it socio-economic, cultural, environmental or religious'.

Several respondents, R1, 4, 5, 11 and 12, mentioned the relationship between personal values and relationships with others. R5 specifically related to values existing within the context of groups and organisations. R11 expanded on the relationship between the individual and 'the other' by commenting that 'good values seem to be the way we positively engage/treat others'. Furthermore, she stated that the link between values and relating to others is engrained from childhood 'as young children we pick up messages from others. e.g. what it feels and looks like when someone shows kindness to others and puts others before themselves' (R11).

R11 wrote extensively in response to this question, explaining that the origin of values comes from upbringing whereby parents/adults act as role models for 'good/kind understanding behaviour'. She stated that children experience what it feels like to act out good values; 'we soon learn cause and effect'. From her perspective good adult role models reinforce and encourage moral values by being sensitive to how others respond, linking this idea to the concept of cause and effect 'If we treat someone with love, we get love back'. This is extended to include factors beyond human 'others', to consideration of the environment; 'for me, it means something that is forever developing in my being, it includes our actions towards others and how we communicate as human beings to one another and the earth'. For her values are about having empathy and understanding for others and the environment/earth, 'to gain further understanding we act out our values daily, and by really engaging and noticing the body language and actions of others we learn "good values and behaviour". It's about being in balance and being in tune'.

Whereas R11's extended answer reflects the sentiments of other respondents, R8 stood out, in contrast, by stating that values are 'principles that one subscribes to in making decisions and trade-offs'. This was interesting in that it was slightly at odds with the consensus of other respondents who linked values to morals and 'good' action. In contrast R8 defined values in an instrumental way, utilising them to benefit the self in order to make a 'trade-off'. Whereas this could be interpreted to mean something of

mutual benefit, it does not concur with the feelings of R11 who suggested that values are more often about putting others first; whereas ‘trade off’ implies compromise or competing interests that may involve sacrificing one value for the sake of another.

## **Question Two**

### **A value is...**

Question Two required respondents to complete sentence stems, beginning with the phrase ‘a value is’. Respondents were asked to select their answers from 22 possible endings, all of which derived from the data from the semi-structured interviews.

The link between values and decision making was firmly established; all thirteen of the respondents chose to end the sentence with ‘something that guides decisions’, with a further ten selecting ‘something that informs decisions’. Values were perceived as linking to action; ‘how you interact and respond on a day to day basis’ (ten respondents) and ‘related to how you behave in the context of the world’ (ten respondents).

Furthermore, the response from this question corroborates the answers from Question One, where several respondents linked values to the treatment of others; twelve respondents decided that values are ‘related to the way you treat people’.

Moreover, many respondents indicated that values are a reflection of personal identity; ‘who you are’ (twelve respondents), ‘what you stand for’ (eleven respondents) and how you choose to live your life (eleven respondents). Nine respondents agreed that values are a belief, rather than knowledge; however, few made links to less tangible concepts such as ‘something which is left when you take away the material side of life’ (three respondents) or values being indefinable but only recognisable ‘when you see it’ (one respondent). None of the participants selected ‘related to Buddhist beliefs, the idea of “what goes around comes around”’, although R11 commented about this in the ‘other’ option stating that values ‘can be related to Buddhist [sic] beliefs but also other religions have a similar set of rules. the [sic] problem with following rules without really understanding, is that there may not be a rule for every situation’.

There was a definite sense of connection to personal autonomy, with nine respondents linking values to concepts such as ‘a personal yardstick’, eight to ‘a moral standpoint’, five to ‘something you have control over’ and four to ‘something that is true to a



<b>Response Respondent</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1</b>	Mutual respect	High expectations (of self and others)	Can-do approach	respect for others' values and beliefs	Life is short - make the most of it
<b>2</b>	Respect for all life	Treat others as you would wish to be treated	Value experiences rather than things	Enjoy life do not endure it; treasure every moment	Give others the opportunities to enjoy life
<b>3</b>	Treat others as you would want to be treated	Take responsibility	Do things to the best of your ability	See things through - be consistent and reliable	Realising what to value
<b>4</b>	Honesty	Truthfulness	Integrity	Taking a broad view	Happiness
<b>5</b>	Honesty	Respect others' skills, abilities, values, etc. - 'gifts differing'	Deliver what I say I will	Do it right	Delivering on my commitments
<b>6</b>	Kindness	Openness	Equality	Tolerance	Ability to listen and be heard
<b>7</b>	Be true to myself if at all possible	Honesty	Respect	Justice	Pebble in the pond - starts at the centre and interacts with others
<b>8</b>	Honesty	Integrity	Saying what I think	Standing up for what I believe in	Doing the right thing (active)
<b>9</b>	Respectful	Non-judgemental	Compassionate	Empathic	
<b>10</b>	To try to be harmless	To try to find a resolution that makes the majority happy	To avoid conflict	To be kind	
<b>11</b>	Too big a subject...because I feel it cannot be defined. It is a whole set of complex behaviours.	My understanding of my own values is the way we positively engage with one another as human beings and treat the	Empathy, understanding, balance.	Holistic - Head, heart and the hands	



		earth with the sensitivity it deserves. i.e. tread lightly			
12	Truth	Love	Charity	Doing no harm (passive)	

Figure 6.3 Summary of personal values (Question Three)

#### Question Four

##### Which of these values are the same as your own?

Respondents were asked to tick which values were the same as their own, from a pre-set list derived from the semi-structured interviews. It is interesting to note that only two of the values mentioned in response to this question, *respect* and *honesty*, were also referred to in the previous ‘open’ question about personal values. Eleven respondents stated that they held these two values. A third value, ‘to encourage everyone to be the best they can be’, gained eleven followers, even though it did not feature in Question Three’s ‘open’ list. Ten respondents mentioned *loyalty* as a prominent value, ‘knowing my children well’ was also mentioned by ten respondents. Freedom of speech, community and manners were all mentioned by nine respondents. Other values that were ticked less frequently were; caring, friendship, trust, independence, harmlessness, peace, charity, community cohesion, love, to encourage everyone to make their own decisions, simplicity and vegetarianism.

#### Question Five

##### Please can you explain the key influences in shaping your values?



Figure 6.4 Wordle image representing Question Five

Having established data regarding specific values the next question addressed key influences. The most prevalent influence on participants' values were parents, according to R1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11 and 12. R4 commented that the influence of his parents had been completely positive, painting an image of 'childhood in a family/community which provided care, respect and encouraged independence'. On the other hand R9 cited parents as a negative influence, 'watching my parents and setting out to be the opposite of them!' R12 commented on family life as a whole, 'family (my parents, my spouse, my children) has had a significant effect on my sense of: love, truth, caring right and wrong, etc. This more than anything else has helped to create and tune the values that are ME'.

R4 considered the role of the family community as a significant influence on values. Family life involved experiences which led to learning, and with the passing of time, the development of wisdom; 'my childhood in a family/community provided care, respect and encouraged independence', 'getting older can bring some wisdom and perspective'. R11 shared this perspective in relation to childhood experience of adults, 'I think my values were moulded/encouraged by those adults around me when I was young. They had a direct influence on me. It's like a light bulb coming on. Someone does something that feels good e.g. their behaviour, music, words, it just feels right'.

Life experiences were also cited as influential. For example, R7 suggested that 'the people I have met along the way have shaped my values'. R2 and 5 concurred with this sentiment whilst R1, 3 and 8 cited partners and work colleagues as being influential. Similarly R12 stated that the wider community, beyond family and friends, are a significant influence in terms of putting values into practice; 'the community has not only provided me with the opportunity to practice these values but also to better understand the potential conflict that can arise from competing values (for example, the acceptability of the white lie)'. R9 cited her working life and explained that her professional role helped to 'show respect, love, compassion and kindness to others and the planet'.

R1, 9, 11, 12 mentioned parenting and the influence of their children on the development of values. R9, who had commented on the negative influence of childhood, specifically mentioned the role of being a parent as a key influence. R11

commented that children are a living reminder of values; 'my children remind me to hold my values dear to me'. As an extension to family life, other respondents, R1, 2, 3, 8, 9 and 11 mentioned friendship as a dominant influence. R9 stated, 'my friends influence my values - those who have had experiences they have told me about, which I am able to take on board and not cause offence or hurt towards them or others in similar situations'. However, no-one referred to a specific friend.

Other than parents, family and friends, values also derived from schooling according to R1, 3, 5 and 12. For example, R12 explained that 'school provided me with knowledge, understanding and academic rigour to debate, challenge and prove these values', however, there were no specific examples of individual teachers making an impact. R3 mentioned the influence of inspirational figures such as the Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi. Furthermore, he had been influenced by child-raising books. R10 cited specific texts such as The Bible and 'Ahimsa' by Nathaniel Altman, books by the philosopher Montaigne and the author Vonnegut. These works had influenced his attitudes to pacifism and humanism as well as reflection on the uncertainty of life, 'understanding that not understanding is perfectly OK and that a belief is just that: nothing is necessarily true'. He referred to inspirational figures and Sir George Trevelyan, who had introduced him to the concept of 'gentling'. R11 cited The Transition Network and Resurgence as being influential on values as well as 'listening to particular music, visiting the earth roundhouse...which brings back a harmony with the earth. So it's about people, reading, music, stories, places'.

There were few references to religion, negative or positive. However, R2 cited Marxism as an influence in contrast to a Catholic upbringing. R6 suggested that her beliefs about the nature of God had influenced her values, in contrast to R10 who explained how a changing perspective on religion influenced his values; initially, being taught how to 'be good' within a church school setting, but in teenage years experiencing 'the realisation that by freeing myself from the baggage of religion I can be better'. On the other hand R12 explained how a Christian faith has provided 'a framework/structure on which these values have been able to develop and grow'.

Finally, R9 suggested that self-reflection is an important influence on values, particularly when others throw light on one's own behaviour; 'I really value what others

think of me, and hate to think that someone thinks badly of me or are judging me incorrectly’.

### **Question Six**

#### **Please tick any of the following in terms of influencing your values**

This question focused on a pre-set list of influences, based on the semi-structured interviews. On the whole the results from Question Six support the responses gathered in Question Five. Respondents were asked to indicate which ‘influences’ had affected their values. As indicated by their personal responses in the previous question, most respondents focused on people-centred influences such as parents and partners.

Eleven respondents cited ‘inspirational people’ as a factor influencing values, alongside ‘observing how others behave’. Books were near the top of the list for ten respondents, alongside parents and partners. Nine respondents were influenced by teachers, seven by school, six agreed that ‘the interconnectivity of the world’ influenced their values, five cited politics, four cited theology and religious upbringing as having influence. Three respondents cited the influence of Brownies, two cited television and one mentioned social media in the ‘other’ option.

### **Question Seven**

#### **To what extent do you think your values have been contradicted in the context of Education Swanage?**



Figure 6.5 Wordle image representing Question Seven

The purpose of Question Seven was to identify links between personal values and work within ES, with specific reference to contradictions. R1, 6 and 7 felt that they could not identify any contradictions between their personal values and the context of ES. R1

commented, 'my values have not been contradicted at all - it has been a great 'fit', which is particularly important in the creation of a new school'.

R7 concurred with this, stating that her values have not been contradicted but rather have 'evolved together'. She reflected:

I don't feel that my values have been contradicted in this context but I do feel that my values have evolved during the journey that the group has travelled. When a group of people with very differing values come together with a common purpose I think it is likely and also positive that your values evolve as you work together and consider each other's views and those of the community and other parties involved.

R3 explained that it was not so much that values were contradicted but that she needed to decide which things were important and worth either arguing about or taking responsibility for, 'which things others can do better than me, and which things I don't feel strongly about so keep quiet on. It's not so much things that contradict my values - it's just prioritising'.

R5 acknowledged that whereas his values were not contradicted, the spread of knowledge, skills and values across ES, was a strength 'as long as we all have the same end in view, which, broadly, I think we do'. However, not all respondents were as positive about the interaction within the group, whilst maintaining that his values had not been contradicted, R8 stated 'I just can't get excited about a lot of the woolly things that people like to claim as 'Values of ES' and then use to justify never facing facts and making necessary tough decisions'. This view was in contrast to R5 who stated that 'the difficulty of everyone making their own decisions, particularly in such a values-driven group, has been reinforced by all having the same end in view'. However, others identified contradictions either within the group and/or externally.

### **Contradictions identified within ES**

R9 said there was a feeling of losing the thread of core values due to a distinction between 'those who think and those who feel'. She pointed out that the 'thinkers' tended to dominate, due to the tasks that needed to be dealt with in order to succeed, this contradiction was seen as having influence over 'the shape of the school'. According to R9 'the thinkers' are the dominant side of ES 'because the tasks required of us need to be dealt with in such a manner as to succeed'. She stated that this led to compromises

‘with something we know we don't really want, but have to agree to’. Looking to the future she expressed a hope that once the practicalities of the site are finalised ‘we can then resume our aspirations for the school, students, community and ultimately, the planet’. She drew an analogy to the work of pioneers, ‘I strongly believe that we need to be pioneers throughout this process as we have been, but we need to stay on track with our ethos and vision’, furthermore she stated:

Looking at our experiences and how the community/opposers perceive our work, will be how these people will view the school, students and staff. They will be the pioneers, too, so we need to lead the way for them, to carve out a path that they can deepen, add to, and nurture along the way.

Some responses inferred that differences in personality led to conflict within the group. For example, R10 explained that when conflict arose it was difficult to build consensus on ‘too many occasions’. He stated that conflict within the group is due to ‘differences in personality more than opinion - and sometimes when people forget that an aspect of the school that is vital to them is maybe not something that will lead to the eventual success of the project’.

Throughout the project ES have aligned with human-scale and cooperative values. R11 expressed a view that aspirations for a ‘flat organisation’ in terms of management structure, inspired by human-scale and cooperative principles, were contradicted by the appointment of ‘Chairs of groups’ which ‘created a hierarchy’. She said that this led to a debate about the vision and ethos, where a group had been established to work on the ES ‘Rainbow’ (Appendix Eleven). She explained that, ‘there was a lack of understanding/lack of trust/conflict when originally it was planned to have been a vision/ethos i.e. values group’, which she attributed to the fact that the ‘Chairs did not wish to be policed by the vision and ethos group’. She explained how this incident caused upset within the group due to a ‘lack of empathy and openness, to sort things out and share concerns’. She explained that she believed the group were not ‘holding each other at the centre’ but were on the contrary acting ‘selfishly and with a lack of understanding for one another’.

### **Contradictions identified external to ES**

Several respondents gave specific examples of contradictions that existed externally to the work of ES. R2 explained that as the free school policy ‘is a Tory policy, this is a

political party that has values that directly contradict my own. In supporting ES I am aware that I am supporting a Tory policy'. R3 commented on the importance of being open minded, in light of criticism on social media such as Facebook and a local internet blog. She also pointed out that even when the group was being criticised, if we believed in 'freedom of speech' then critics have a right to say what they think, 'even if it is inconvenient for us'. This respondent commented on the importance of being open minded, which at times was very difficult. R10 also referred to this by stating that conflict within the group is easier to cope with when it is based on a 'detractor's' politics or prejudices, but more frustrating when based on 'misunderstanding' or 'because we are not allowed to clarify the facts'.

Additionally, R4 highlighted that ES is 'built on the lack of values shown by the County Council'. This respondent felt that DCC, as a democratic organisation, should have supported the community of Swanage, 'it has shown no trust, integrity or honesty. It has been partial in its use of evidence and has failed to understand community and sustainable concerns'. Furthermore, R4 expressed an opinion that DCC did not appear to be concerned with doing the best for the children of Swanage but was 'more concerned with protecting an existing school.'

### **Question Eight**

**To what extent have your values been satisfied/reinforced in the context of Education Swanage?**



Figure 6.6 Wordle image for Question Eight

The aim of this question was to identify how members of ES felt their values were reinforced and satisfied in the context of the school project. Overall there was a high

level of congruence and satisfaction, for example R1 stated that his values had been reinforced to 'a great extent'. However, R2 felt that his values would only be reinforced if the project succeeded in opening 'a community co-operative school'. R3 concurred with this, stating that there was congruence within the group in respect of the outcome of the project, 'everyone involved genuinely wants to build something good and solid and long-lasting – and to make it the best school it can be in the context'.

Some respondents felt that there was intrinsic value in the work of the group regardless of the outcome; this was most frequently expressed in the context of 'community' (see Wordle, Figure 5.6). For R3, 4, 5, 6, 10 and 11 the project satisfied/reinforced their values because it was beneficial to the wider community. For example, R4 stated that ES represented 'people working together towards a community goal, giving children in Swanage an innovative educational opportunity'. Furthermore, R5 explained that the work within the group was based on respect which was beneficial in 'getting under the skin of the community...(a bit)'.

Furthermore, R6 and R11 expressed a view that the dynamic of the group itself represented a community in action. R11 described ES as 'a caring, nurturing community'. The manner in which ES conducted itself as a community was also highlighted by R3, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 11. R3 felt that the public face of ES, based on honesty and respect, is something to be proud of; 'one that I am pleased to be associated with'. R6 expressed a view that the way ES conducted itself, by being 'fair, tolerant and understanding in all dealings' would help to create a school 'available to all regardless of ability or wealth'. This view is expanded by R7 who stated 'my values have been totally reinforced in ES by the fact that many of us share some core values and when you are working towards a common goal with common values this serves to strengthen feelings'. R8 was slightly more selective; implying that there was a distinction between the amount of work people were doing within the group, he stated, 'I very much value working with many in the ES group (mainly those putting in the serious effort) who share my wish to achieve and deliver something truly worthwhile against all the odds'. R11 felt that the 'journey' had been a learning experience 'with a group of individuals with such drive and energy', yet conceded that, although the group do 'extremely well' it would also be beneficial for them to spend more time together face-to-face, to 'help us form deeper and more understanding relationships within the school'.



R9 looked to the future and saw the appointment of the head teacher designate as a significant step forward in putting theory into practice. She went on to state that ‘he understands the core values of the group, has the ability to work with them and lead the way with the ethos, as long as we are all clear about what they are and how we should put theory into practice’. R10 was also forward thinking by focusing on the concept of hope, the ability of the project to bring ‘something really, really good for the future – better for children, better for the environment, better for the town’. He links this to his ‘environmental values’, as does R11, in wanting to improve things generally, in order to ‘make things better’.

### Question Nine

**Please explain why and how you became involved in Education Swanage?**



Figure 6.7 Wordle image for Question Nine

This significance of this question was to explore the link between values and social action. The reasons for involvement were as follows:

1. For the sake of the community (R2, 4, 11);
2. Shared vision and values (R1, 6, 11);
3. To ensure the future well-being, vitality, viability of town (R5, 9);
4. To provide something that should be available in Swanage (R4, 7);
5. Due to the Purbeck Review of Schools (R8, 11);
6. Realising that creating a school in Swanage was viable (R3, 10);
7. To make a contribution (R2);
8. To offer specific skills (R3);
9. To avoid children travelling so far to school (R4);

10. The opportunity to take part in community action (R11);
11. The opportunity to create a human-scale school (R11).

The desire to put something back into the community was strongly expressed, for example by R4 who stated that he got involved to help ‘reduce the madness of bussing children around Purbeck or making them travel to Poole for something that should be available in Swanage’. The future well-being and vitality of the town was prominent in the responses. These views were polarised against the frustration and anger levelled at the Purbeck Review process which R11 explained had ‘on one hand encouraged sustainable communities and...on the other DCC imposing something very different on us’.

The ways in which respondents had become involved in ES were as follows:

1. Ongoing involvement in the school's reorganisation process (R6, 7, 10, 11).
2. Through a network of people already involved in the project (R3, 7).
3. An employment opportunity (R1, 4).
4. Responding to an article in the local press (R5).

## Question Ten

**To what extent do your values influence the work of Education Swanage? Please give specific examples if appropriate.**



Figure 6.8 Wordle image representing Question Ten

Responses can be divided into two main groups; those who felt values had little or no influence and those who felt values had an influence.

**Group One - Those who felt values had little or no influence.**

R2 and R9 felt that they did not have any values-based influence at all. Whilst R2 did not give a reason for this opinion R9 wrote extensively, suggesting that the reason for the lack of influence was largely due to being ignored. R9 perceived herself to be a 'quieter member of the group' who was often overlooked, talked over or interrupted. This feeling was expressed very strongly and R9 summed up by saying 'sometimes I wonder what I am doing in the group'. In contrast, R6 expressed a view that her values were not influential because the group already shared the same values.

**Group Two - Those who felt they had an influence**

Most respondents felt that they had an influence within the group, although not necessarily as a direct result of their values; R5 makes a link between behaviour and her work in the project. For example, she stated, 'I think my behaviour may have been helpful to one or two of the work streams in terms of helping with planning and getting organised, but that's not the same as my values influencing the work directly'. On the other hand, R1, 3, 4, 7, 10 and 11 could see a direct link between values and being pragmatically influential. For example, R3 stated, 'things need to be practical – I try to translate the values into the practicalities of what the school will actually do'. R4 linked values such as integrity to his professional skills which were beneficial to the work of the group. Similarly, R7 explained that in valuing the views and ideas of children she had influenced the way they had worked as part of the staff recruitment process. Furthermore, R4 outlined how, by valuing harmony, he had tried to create situations of conciliation and this extended out into the community, 'I value other people's opinions so try to gather as much input and views from others in the community as possible by talking about the school to anyone who is interested'.

The theme of conciliation emerged in other responses; R10 explained 'I hope my values lead us to seek resolution when there's conflict and a pragmatic response to challenges'. R11 talked about 'breaking down barriers, involving the community and enabling their support'. Practical networking in the community was also an important theme for R11, 'together we devised a form that could be used for local curriculum/expression of interest, which has been a great tool for engaging community groups'. She also felt that

‘staying strong to our values e.g. food at the heart of the school is important for some of the parents who will be sending their children to our school’.

### **Validation group**

The validation group meeting was attended by six members of ES, including myself. The group were presented with a summary of my research journey so far (Appendix Ten). The presentation covered an explanation of the research issue, research questions, important literature, the research methodology and design and the conceptual framework. It was explained that the research was being conducted from a practical theological perspective; reflecting theologically on practice, rather than the practice itself being theological in nature. The purpose of the validation group was explained; to affirm or challenge my research journey so far in relation to others’ experiences of working in ES. It was explained that my thesis would be an interpretive reflection of the findings therefore conclusions would have bias, which others may disagree with. It was stressed that in this case the ownership of the research was with the researcher, however, other members of ES still had an important voice in affirming or challenging the findings. It was explained that if the validation group felt that my representation was at odds with their experience of ES that needed to be discussed. Therefore, I summarised some of the key findings and some of my tentative conclusions in order to focus our discussion on how values influenced our practice.

### **Summary of presentation**

The presentation began with the title of the research and a time-lapse video-clip of the ground being unearthed on the building site of the new school. This helped to explain the metaphorical reference in the title, ‘unearthing values to building foundations’. The presentation went on to an audio-clip of R.S. Thomas reading ‘The Bright Field’ and my personal journey as a teacher was explained, with specific reference to how it relates to the symbolism within the poem and links to the idea of finding ‘inner treasure’, which is buried within us. I went on to explain what is meant by a ‘gap in knowledge’ and stated that in this context the contribution would be to explain how values influenced a human-scale free school being founded, the first of its kind in the UK. It was explained that the research was about investigating how values were influential in the work that we did, which also related to other sub-questions such as ‘what are values?’ and ‘what happens when we live in contradiction to our values?’

My explanation included the living theory approach, particularly in regard to its focus on exploring the relationship between living in contradiction and accordance with one's values, in order to improve practice. Definitions of values were also included as was Wetz's work (2009), which had been an educational influence on the research. Scholars who have influenced the design of the research were not mentioned in detail, partly because I did not want to pre-empt too much of the conversation or present them with information that would require a lot of explanation. The concept of the work relating to the sacred was alluded to by linking it to my grandfather's 'golden thread' influence on my own theology.

The research design was explained so that they could see how the methods were connected, from the interviews, to the online survey and finally to the validation group. The method of data collection was explained and they were shown an example of my OneNote folder, so they could see how the information was being stored. It was explained that the validation group was an example of conducting a reflection cycle and therefore a form of action research. I explained the stages of such a cycle and suggested that in our discussion we could reflect on specific examples of practice, reviewing them in light of our experience, and discuss how we might do things differently if we were to do them again. The key themes we discussed were related to how our values influenced contradiction, both in relation to external and internal forces. As the conversation developed several themes for discussion emerged.

### **Summary of themes emerging from the conversation**

The following section is a summary of the conversation, divided into themes. I have included some of the transcribed dialogue in italics. The purpose of this approach is to enable the written conversation to represent some of the 'energy flow' of the verbal conversation (Whitehead, 2012b). Only the first initial of the participants are used in order to protect their anonymity. Where participants have the same first initial a number is used to differentiate.

#### **1. Shared values**

We discussed shared values and the fact that we had all worked together for a long time, therefore there appeared to be an overlap with each individual's values. However, if we

took any set of values, each one of us would have a different overlap. The group did not think it was true to say that we had a set of shared ES values as such; it was more accurate that there must be something at the core of our work that enough of us shared to enable it to work.

### ***Dialogue***

*P: It's interesting with any group that it doesn't matter if the group has a shared aim or are meeting in the pub once a week, there is always some overlap, but some things on the edges that you will fundamentally disagree on, but it's finding those things you share, enough of those, that keep you friends, or you can keep working together.*

*H: Like you say we must have found that to have kept going.*

*G: Without necessarily being able to say what they are.*

*P: Early on we would find things that fitted our aims, HSE being a prime example and say 'oh look at this'.*

*N: It's like a collective conscience, is it Jung? Shared values that we all have that when you get together they are all similar.*

*H: You'd think that from the outside we had a lot of shared values, but when you look at the analysis from the data then you don't think that.*

*N: There's a common thread, diversity and divergence but also a common thread which is actually getting the school together, having the ethos which we have come up with.*

*H: I have written about a golden thread in my thesis, which my grandfather said runs from generation to generation...*

## **2. Contradiction of values**

I outlined the main external and internal areas of contradiction which had emerged from the findings. The Purbeck Review, the value of freedom of speech and the free school conundrum of conniving with the coalition government. I explained that some felt that we were contradicting our values and what we stood for in relation to our political persuasion. I related this to Whitehead's experiences as a teacher, where he felt there were external influences affecting his teaching. The group explored how, in setting up ES, we had overcome external influences but created more internal contradictions of our own. I outlined ten key internal contradictions, which had emerged from the findings, taking one example, 'conflict and conversation', as a theme for the validation group to discuss.

There was consensus that the lists of contradictions, both internal and external, represented an authentic depiction of people's experience as a member of ES. There was nothing specific that made people feel uncomfortable in the data presented. One person

felt that conflict and conversation had to go together otherwise nothing would move forwards and similarly, we could have spent hours not getting anywhere in conversation. G said, in relation to conflict and conversation, ‘until you have some things to decide, which sometimes result in conflict in some situations, you don't get full value, you need both of those things’.

### **Dialogue**

*P: In many ways it is these contradictions which have helped us get where we are, it would have been much more comfortable to have gone through everything and for everyone to have agreed as we went a long, but I have been part of groups where everyone agrees as they go along and nothing happens. Sometimes you need that friction to get things going.*

*C1: The alternative is that you have a project which hasn't got to be as broad as the one we are doing so everyone can be in tune with each other, and you can just say like it or lump it, but we couldn't do that with the school. We could have set up a Toby Young<sup>5</sup> grammar school academy, teaching Latin, some of the group would have liked that, and others would have just left.*

*P: So you are just left with the top person. We have had conflict because we are trying to please everybody which is impossible so we have had to compromise, all of us have had to compromise.*

*C1: Yes, I think it has been a good learning curve, but I haven't regretted a single conflict or conversation because it is such a complicated thing.*

*N: It is evolving and changing now as the project is moving forward and it is nice to see that. Do you also think that despite it being internal it is reflecting the cross section of the community which is what the school is about – just echoing everyone else's words, it's been a very useful journey to have all this conflict and conflict resolution throughout, to try and thrash out all the problems so it's what is needed for the community at the end of the day which is what we want to have this fantastic school that serves the children and the community and brings out more vibrancy and sustainability for Swanage and that we needed all of this to make that happen in the best way possible. It's an authentic, truthful way of dealing with it, you obviously get the emotion, the thinkers and the feelers, but it's all about balance and coming together at the end.*

### **3. Values and compromise**

We discussed the differences between absolute and relative values, and whether we acted according to consequences or duty. One person, C, said that they did not have absolute values, but scalable ones, for example, localism, ‘I like to think, what's the most local solution?’ I asked the group to explore the idea of what makes values shift, in

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<sup>5</sup> Toby Young is a British journalist who established The West London Free School in 2011 (<http://www.westlondonfreeschool.co.uk/overview/our-vision.html>).

terms of being scalable, was it the context or another reason? The discussion then focused on compromise. C explained that there were 'quite a few things to do with the school I am not happy with and don't agree with my values but I will live with them, so I have not changed my values I am just living with it'.

### ***Dialogue***

*H: There seems to be three C words emerging; compromise, contradiction and congruence.*

*Do you think compromise was a bigger factor in moving us forward than congruence? Do you think most of the time we were compromising our individual values rather than finding congruence with each other?*

*C1: I think all of us wanted us to see a school, the value was the value of having a local school, that was the value that we all share. We could easily have made Purbeck School better, all of us could have done it, but that wasn't our value.*

*H: We were determined to do that weren't we?*

*C1: So that is something we all shared. It was easier at the beginning when it was some amorphous, dream-like thing but the further down we got the more hard decisions had to be made but to start off with that major thing...[end of transcript].*

## **4. Dealing with values**

The group were introduced to concepts of values. We discussed that the school itself was the only value that we all shared and there was no contradiction about that. We went onto explore how the methods of reaching this shared value had resulted in contradiction and compromise of our everyday values. I posed the idea that it was these day-to-day values, of how you live your life in relation to others, which were the ones we grappled with in terms of contradiction.

### ***Dialogue***

*C1: When we were at Nikki's house having that big argument, my point then was that we didn't count, the school did. I never saw the need for us to get on. I could see the need for us to get stuff done, but...*

*C2: But that's how you work and that's not a criticism.*

*C1: But I wasn't interested in being part of a group, anyway, it **is** good to be part of the group, but that just happens to be the case.*

*G: Another stage is coming, apart from being a company, we aren't going to exist for much longer. So you've got the opportunity to do it better this time and I passionately would love it if we were better at taking time out to not necessarily have a discussion about what my values are and what your values are and all that stuff but to discuss how we are working together, what's gone well, what hasn't, I would absolutely love that.*



## 5. Holding the balance

I suggested that part of our role in ES was to hold the contradictions in balance and that perhaps finding enough congruence to move forwards was like a safety net for a tightrope walker. I asked if it was holding the balance and keeping the value of the school in sight that kept us from falling off the metaphorical tightrope.

### *Dialogue*

*H: It is finding enough congruence of values for us all to be able to work together to achieve the same thing.*

*P: it was that strong.*

*G: Absolutely, which is why we have got there because we have all got a close enough vision of the same thing, of what we are trying to aim for.*

*P: But when you walk on a tightrope aren't you supposed to focus on one thing in the distance, I've never walked a tightrope so it might not be true.*

*H: Oh you have! Also my own perspective with this golden thread idea, is kind of this thing that there is something about the way we have gone about this which takes me back to the ontological, perhaps there is something in that, that there seems to be a kind of energy about ES that keeps us moving forward as well, rather than giving up.*

*N: I would say that's ambition. There is a difference between aspiration and ambition, we have got that common goal haven't we, an aspiration is something that anyone can say, oh yeah I would love to have a free school in Swanage I'd love to go and learn how to be a tightrope walker but an ambition to be a tightrope walker is, you would actually learn and go through that process of learning, you would actually go ahead and do it, so maybe we are just ambitious people.*

## 6. Liminal existence

We had a conversation about how we coped with the workload in ES, which resulted in exploring the concepts of 'living in the margins' (Veling, 1996) and liminality (Van Genneep, 2013). These concepts relate to habituating a transitional place 'betwixt and between' two phases (Turner, 1967) or according to Meyer and Land (2006, pp.19-32) a 'stuck place' where one may 'oscillate' between old and emergent understanding of a given situation. Cousin (2006, p.139) says that this state of liminality 'involves identity shifts which can entail troublesome, unsafe journeys', which are akin to the walk across the tightrope. These concepts were related to the 'turning aside' reference in 'The Bright Field'; first, our journey in ES had been like living on the edge of our own lives in terms of our nerves, sleeplessness, staying up late to finish work, getting up early to do the same, all of which had to fit around a life that already existed. Second, we were on a journey from a previous understanding of how things were to a new way of seeing the

educational landscape in Swanage; both literally and figuratively. Liminality represented this marginal existence in which we lived, one of transition, which others did not understand, a place that we could neither retreat from, back to our previous lives, nor rush forward to a future existence that was still developing in our imaginations.

### ***Dialogue***

*C1: I have certainly gone through a lull, you know like S went away and then came back into the whole process again, I went through a real bad phase where I didn't have the energy to do it and I remember you ringing me up to say are you alright and all of us have probably had that fading in and out but there has been this....*

*H: Golden thread? Something like that? Bit too romantic for you?!*

*C1: But there's been enough of it left to drag people back in, a golden lasso! Whatever!*

*N: But that's because we have got lives outside the group, we have all got our own things going on outside this and our own battles and aspirations and ambitions and goals and things.*

*H: We weave in and out don't we?*

### **7. An example of action reflection**

We discussed specific examples of how we had used reflection to make decisions. This conversation related to how our values influenced our practice. For example, in trying to decide whether we could have helium balloons at an event, or ice pops from Tesco instead of locally made ice-cream. These represent examples of the many times we had to discuss, reflect, take action and then review the myriad decisions that needed to be made within the group. All of these decisions related to the influence of our values. We talked about how we could live more authentically with our values, particularly in terms of genuine community engagement.

### ***Dialogue***

*C1: But the values, I know it sounds pathetic about the ice cream and not going to Tesco's, I hate going to Tesco's. That's me but it was partly the thing about making the school a local school, if there is a local way of doing stuff then I think we should do it the local way.*

*G: I think that's a really good example, it's something that you feel really passionate about, I don't feel so passionate, I'm not convinced that ES collectively feels that passionate, maybe I am wrong, I haven't heard that, to represent that on our behalf would not be fair at this stage.*

*P: You would have to do it in a personal capacity.*

*H: I think with the balloon thing though it does represent the ethos and vision of TSS because we have talked about the environment in our EB and charter and that students should have respect for the environment and if there is a proven link between helium balloons and damage to the environment, which I think there is, then it is consistent with our ethos not to have them.*

*C2: we have also discussed supporting local businesses.*

*C1: We have done that at every level.*

I closed the meeting by asking the members of the group if they were in agreement with me proceeding with the next stage of the research, and they affirmed that they were all in agreement. Following the meeting I received a number of emails from members of the validation group, expressing their appreciation of the meeting and that it had been a positive experience (Appendix Twelve).

### **Summary**

This chapter has presented the findings in a systematic and thematic way from the three main stages of the data collection. The stages were linked so there was internal coherence between the semi-structured interviews, the online survey and the validation group. The themes that have been featured are a reflection of the most significant aspects of the findings, from my perspective, at the time of the validation group. This approach was verified by the validation group who were comfortable with the process and agreed that I could proceed with my study in order to reach interpretive and conceptual conclusions.

An interpretive discussion of the findings is found in the next chapter, creating a relationship between themes which emerged and theoretical and conceptual insights gleaned from the wider literature explored previously in Chapter Three.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN - INTERPRETIVE DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides the arena for detailed analysis to be presented. It discusses ‘interpretive conclusions’ that emerged from the findings. Trafford and Leshem (2008, p.172) suggest that answers to research questions emerge ‘as you interpret, analyse and discuss your evidence’, hence the purpose of this interpretive discussion is to create a relationship between the descriptive text associated with the research design (Chapters Four and Five), the findings (Chapter Six) and theoretical insights from the literature that was used to inform the research (Chapter Three). The relationship between human-scale education and the research findings is also explored. Therefore, the evidence is analysed and interpreted in order to demonstrate internal theoretical consistency (p.172).

However, although the findings represent the views of individuals they are not a collective response. The interpretation of the overarching themes will not necessarily reflect all of the participants’ views. Examples have been used to illustrate the interpretations, but it is not possible to claim that they represent each individual in the group. Therefore, the affirmation of the validation group was used to support the interpretations, based on an expression of alignment with the interpretive conclusions, which were shared at the meeting. My interpretation explores how values were influential as explanatory principles and standards of judgement in founding the school and how this influence can be explained as a living educational theory. The evidence suggests intrinsic values shaped the way we acted, particularly when faced with contradiction. The values we engaged with in founding the school often seemed buried in contradiction; on the other hand they sometimes illuminated our actions and operated in congruence with each other, as if they were an invisible yet present thread weaving through our lives.

This general interpretation is in accordance with Schwartz’s (2012) concept of values being on one hand self-enhancing (extrinsic) and on the other self-transcending (intrinsic). From my theological perspective it is the latter, the self-transcendental influence of values, where it is possible to find a ‘trace’ of the sacred in the way values influence our understanding of ourselves, our relationships with others and our transformative work in the community. From a human-scale perspective it was our ability to be in relationship and conversation with each other that enabled us to work

through conflict and contradiction, through a process of conversation and compromise, which led to congruence and enabled change. Our intrinsic values shaped our lived experience and acted as explanatory principles for our actions in relation to our striving for a 'common cause' (PIRC, 2011). This discussion is a practical explanation of that experience, in other words a living educational theory, in relation to Whitehead and McNiff's interpretation (2006).

Although there was internal consistency within the theoretical framework, which enlightened how the research was designed, as an insider I had my own bias in the interpretation of the findings. This needs to be considered when examining the relationship between the theoretical insights into the research design and principles 'adopted' by ES. The interpretive discussion is based on my reflexive analysis and may not be consistent with the views of others in the group. However, my claim to knowledge is still valid as an inductive explanation of the influence of values as I am being transparent about my conclusions. Etherington explains that researcher reflexivity opens up qualitative research 'as the capacity of the researcher to acknowledge how their own experiences and contexts (which might be fluid and changing) inform the process and outcomes of inquiry' (2004, pp.31-32). Furthermore, I used myself as a heuristic tool in the research; searching for 'essential meanings connected with everyday human experiences' (Moustakas and Douglas, 1985, p.39). This was not an objective pursuit but was nevertheless disciplined in its approach.

Identifying theoretical consistency informs how values have influenced the work of ES, my claims to knowledge and the role of theoretical insights as explanatory principles in interpreting the data. For example, the work of Schwartz and PIRC, practical theologians Ganzevoort and Veling, living theorists Whitehead and McNiff are not directly influential in the workings of the group, but rather are of relevance in validating the research. This relationship will be explored further in Chapter Eight, as scholarly theoretical relationships are drawn on, to evaluate conceptual conclusions.

Meanwhile, this chapter begins with an exploration of the relationship between each theoretical perspective and the findings. Then, interpretive themes are explored which relate to how values were influential as criteria by which our work can be judged.

### **Interpretive relationship with the conceptualisation of values**

As explored in Chapter Three Schwartz's (1992, p.3) values theory identifies a dichotomous relationship between self-transcending and self-enhancing values. The Common Cause Handbook defines these categories, in relation to practice based contexts, as intrinsic and extrinsic values. The former promote action that results in the achievement of a common goal, whereas the latter are more likely to enhance individual aspirations.

The findings demonstrate that ES were influenced by intrinsic values and worked collaboratively towards a common cause. For example, R7 (p.97) states that we worked towards a 'common purpose' and R5 that we all had 'the same end on view'. Furthermore, the findings from the interviews and survey support the view that in general ES were influenced by intrinsic, self-transcending values, for example core values such as respect, honesty, encouragement of others, loyalty, kindness and integrity (see figure 5.3). The overriding characteristic in defining the term values concerned principles that guide action in relation to our interaction in the world. Moreover, in relation to external contradictions, members of ES identified a number of examples of being driven by intrinsic values that related to community mindedness, for example, concern for the impact on the community of the loss of secondary education and the disconnect of children travelling so far to school. Furthermore, the motivations of individuals were intrinsic in tone, being driven by a sense of unfairness and frustration on behalf of the community in the context of secondary education being removed from the town.

However, the findings are not devoid of references to extrinsic, self-enhancing values, as the group grappled with the contrast between those who were more forceful and those who were more passive. There is also evidence of a disconnect between the development of personal and organisational values, as demonstrated in the distinction between values being seen as a 'trade-off' to benefit one's self (R8), compared to those who were driven by the pursuit of a common goal (R7, p101). As R10 states (p.98) at times members of the group forgot that an aspect of the school was not for them but for the common cause and at moments such as this contradictions emerged.

The interplay between the influence of intrinsic and extrinsic values is interesting in relation to the working through of contradiction. It is in this context that an interpretive relationship can be made to the conceptualisation of the sacred.

### **Interpretive relationship with the conceptualisation of the sacred**

The findings suggest that the motivations of ES were broadly of an intrinsic, self-transcending nature; people were influenced by core values that related to a shared vision for the community. The motivations that drove the group were based on providing a school for the community and making the town more viable for future generations. However, the contradictions placed on the work of the group, from external sources and internal conflict, often threatened the successful realisation of the project. From my perspective, at times of contradiction, there was a sacred dimension to our action that resulted from the evocation of awe and passion in prompting us to find ways to realise our common cause. For example, when the hierarchical structure of the group threatened the development of our vision and ethos, we found a way, through conversation, to compromise and make progress towards our common purpose. As R5 states (p.98), ‘we all had the same end in view’. This process of ‘critical conversation’ was central to the progress of the group and the patterns that developed, as we worked through each conflict, created meaning that resonates with a contemporary interpretation of the sacred. For example, Lynch’s sociological perspective and Ganzevoort’s theological insight are pertinent; it is the evocation of intrinsic values that prompts action of a sacred quality because the influence of such values has a gravitational pull towards the common cause.

### **Interpretive relationship with practical theology**

This sacred ‘pull’ also creates resonance between the influence of values and theoretical perspectives in practical theology. The findings demonstrate that intrinsic values were at the very centre of our lives, focused particularly on the ‘common cause’ of the school. In this sense our values evoked ‘awe and passion’ (Ganzevoort, 2009, p.3) and our lives gravitated towards their influence. From my perspective this is a ‘trace’ of the sacred in our work, from which patterns can be identified that are embedded in action and meaning, as we worked towards building the school. The patterns that emerged related to the ways in which values were influential when they ‘rubbed up against’ each other, moving from contradiction, to compromise and onto congruence. By exploring these

patterns it is possible to trace the way in which we reflected on practice in order to move forward. However, as the introduction to this chapter suggests, sometimes our values seemed unobtainable (hidden in contradiction), and at other times they were immanent, present and assumed to be working ‘alongside us’; working in congruence. This sounds as if values are tangible, whilst at the same time transient and non-material, and yet in finding evidence of patterns of influence it would seem that they are ‘real’ in prompting and influencing action. In the interviews one participant, J, alluded to this idea of the transcendent/ immanent quality of values, stating that ‘the things you hold dear, when you take away the material side of life what is left is the truth, your values’.

The influence of intrinsic values also relates to the concept of ‘the other’, which is a recurring theme in the research evidence and, has already been mentioned, relates to the work of practical theologian Veling. Rather than action being based on ‘power and control’ it is sometimes based on service to the other, as Veling says, ‘it is not a self made doing in which I accomplish the project of my life; rather it is a responsive doing in which I answer with my life’ (2005, p.85). Veling refers to the work of pope John Paul II who believed that the way people live, the commitments they make and the actions they take give us insight into the very essence of personhood (p.85). This is very powerful in shaping my understanding of how values influenced the work of ES. The relationship to ‘the other’ was highlighted as being significant in how values are important to human action, for example, respondents B, C and F, (Theme One, interviews), stated that they are about ‘how you treat people’. R11, (Question One, survey), stated that ‘good values seem to be the way we positively engage/treat others’. When we might otherwise have been appropriating our experiences merely to extend our self knowledge (extrinsic values), we were forced, by our intrinsic values, to act on behalf of the other, not just the immediate other but those we do not even know. The concept of ‘relationship’, in the context of how one treats others, was intrinsically linked with values in the findings. This is a very relational, inclusive, influential and active form of living.

Veling takes the discussion further and says that talking of ontology and epistemology is not enough as the call of the other prompts us to act, not sleep. Quoting Levinas he explains that ‘ontology as a state of affairs can afford to sleep, but love cannot sleep’ (Veling, 2005, p.122). Therefore, the nature of values must, by definition, be action-



based, perhaps even born out of love for the other, or at least an evocation of ‘awe and passion’. If values are influential as standards of judgment then they must lead us to action. The interpretive conclusions of the findings suggest that the process of balancing the influence of intrinsic and extrinsic values, and the impact of contradiction, is at the core of understanding the explanation of the work of ES as an educational living theory.

### **Interpretive relationship with living theory**

Whitehead and McNiff define values as being grounds for action, as living critical standards of judgement that inform practice in relation to others:

If you perceive yourself as in living interaction with the world, and also involved with others in processes of knowledge creation, you may come to see social purposes as finding ways of improving both your own processes of interaction and knowledge creation. (2006, p.24)

They interpret values as a duality between ontological ‘flows of energy’, which give meaning and purpose to the world and epistemological knowledge creation; people create their own knowledge, drawing insight from others, using this as a means to have an educational influence in their own learning and in the learning of others. The pursuit of epistemological understanding is an exercise in ‘methodological inventiveness’ (Dadds and Hart, 2001) in order to develop knowledge and seek understanding.

It is these ontological and epistemological values that develop knowledge and seek understanding in explaining the social purposes of the values of ES, which were to promote equality and democratic practices (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.25) in the establishment of a school. ES developed such values in order to challenge normative assumptions and search for more ‘inclusional and relational’ ways of living (p.25).

Living theory encourages the development of inclusion and caring relationships, leading to ‘emancipatory practices’. The values of ES, as defined through the research data, helped us to judge our practices, so the values themselves acted as ‘living standards of judgement’ about the quality of our work (p.25). Whitehead and McNiff are particularly interested in the role of contradiction in exploring how values influence action (p.32) and in the context of ES contradiction was significant in explaining the influence of values. When values were being contradicted ES was challenged to improve the quality of practice. In a sense we were using our values to re-write the narrative of our experience, by rebuilding a school in the exact location of the one that closed. The

meaning and definition of values became apparent as they were influential in overcoming contradiction.

In overcoming contradiction, intrinsic values were influential as ontological standards of judgement which reflected who we were and how we understood ourselves in the world (p.82), particularly in relation to overcoming the inequality and lack of democracy we had experienced throughout the Purbeck Review of Schools process. The premise of action research is to reflect on a situation in order to improve it and the evidence suggests that intrinsic values helped identify the standards of judgement that moved us in the direction of improvement as we founded the school. Once values had been identified in a specific context and contradictions had been worked through, it was easier to live them out in practice. By articulating them we had a sense of the authentic standards we applied to our actions. Therefore, the work of ES was a 'thoughtful educational engagement' in the sense that the group sought to improve a situation and measure success by the 'good' that was produced (p.83), hence a living theory developed as an explanation of the influence of our values over our actions, whilst holding the often tense balance of our relationships with one another. The primacy of relationships, so poignant in the fields of practical theology and living theory, is also the basis from which human-scale education derives its principles, as espoused by Wetz.

### **Interpretive relationship to human-scale education**

The problem of improving young peoples' experience of education needs addressing. Wetz says this can be done by building positive, meaningful relationships in schools. He provides 'principles for rethinking the way we design and organise our secondary schools' (2009, p.9) and his model of the 'urban village school' develops the concept of learning communities which put relationships at the heart of its organisation and design. Human-scale values develop 'habits of practice that give young people partnership and voice in their community and in their learning', by 'transforming schools' relationships with families and their community, engaging families in learning and utilising the community as a context for study' (p.9), schools become more inclusive and relational. The integrated application of this approach, based on intrinsic values, has the potential to transform schools as communities of engagement and aspiration.

Factors that make for a successful childhood and the implications they have on the design and organisation of schools are worthy of consideration. According to Wetz the most significant factor is the primacy of relationships; a value which provides security, trust, contains anxiety and regulates emotions for children. A major concern is the interrelatedness between people; child to adult in particular. He promotes Bowlby's (1969) theory of attachment as a means to securing a firm base in relationships for children. He suggests that this should be used to help inform and design schools in order for them to act as a 'containing parent' and a 'holding environment'. Such a shift in understanding and tolerance of young people will, according to Wetz (2009, pp.68-69), provide firm boundaries for children that may experience anxiety. A criticism of the work of ES, from some members of the community, is that a school in Swanage will make local children more insular. However, the findings suggest that there is value in engaging with Wetz's concept of 'holding', not in the sense of holding children back, but rather 'holding' them in a nurturing and caring environment, which will enable them to be independent, happy and caring young people who continue to enjoy successful lives and relationships throughout their adulthood.

This approach can help close the historical achievement gap between young people from different social backgrounds and cultures. It can lead more teenagers to aspire to continue their learning beyond school. Michael Wilshaw, Chief Inspector of Schools, stated that too many of England's state school children are being let down by the education system, specifically in rural and coastal areas (Ofsted, 2013). Wilshaw's comments are poignant bearing in mind Swanage is situated on a rural peninsula. Despite the image of Dorset as an affluent county, the nearest secondary school in Wareham languished at the bottom of the DfE league tables (DfE, school statistics, 2012). Genuine parental interest in education in Swanage and a focus on the primacy of relationships became driving forces for ES as we tried to create a school that would improve educational standards and engage the community in rejuvenating the economic and social viability of the town. These perspectives are supported by the survey responses to Question Nine where respondents explained that they had become involved in ES 'for the sake of the community' and 'to ensure the future well-being, vitality and viability of the town'. By integrating intrinsic, human-scale values and principles into the development of the vision for the new school in the context of Swanage, ES were

able to envisage a learning community that could build capacity for positive relationships in a school environment designed to close the achievement gap.

### **Thematic interpretive relationships between the theoretical perspectives and the findings**

#### **Interpretive Theme One - The definition and meaning of ‘values’**

The research data revealed a variety of interpretations of the term ‘values’. However, a generic definition emerged, which all respondents alluded to. First, values guide and inform interaction in the context of the world on a daily basis in relation to how humans respond to, and treat others. Second, they are a reflection of personal identity.

The relationship between self and other in the definition of values presented is to some extent theoretically consistent between ES, the wider literature on values, the premise of living theory, insights from practical theology and Wetz’s human-scale thinking. For example, in the semi-structured interview responses (Theme One) and in the online survey responses (Question One) there was a link between the participants’ understanding of the term values and their understanding of the important role they play in relationships. Values were identified as being important decision-making tools in how you treat people and the relationship between personal values and relationships with others was mentioned by several respondents. However, although there is some consistency in the definition of values, particularly in the relationship between the self and the other, a further interpretive exploration is required to understand how they shape the way we act in order to influence ourselves, others and social formation. This is to some extent an analysis of culture, which Leshem and Trafford (2006, p.639) describe as ‘the values that determine action in specific locations’. Thus, the influence of ES’s intrinsic values shaped the culture that determined the action that led to change in the specific location of Swanage.

According to Woodcock and Francis (1989) ‘a value is a belief in action’ (p.v) and ‘values shape behaviour’ (p.11). Furthermore, they are ‘essential whenever decisions are made, goals are set, or problems are solved’ (p.x). These insights provide theoretical links to exploring the influence of values in the context of ES, where our individual sense of self was often in conflict in relation to others, within the group and externally. Although there was general consensus about ‘our values’, the elusive and relative nature

of the term often led to contradictions in the way we acted. The values espoused by participants in this research do not form a consistent set of criteria by which our enacted work can be judged. As suggested by the research of Inkeles and Levinson (1969) and Hofstede (1991), such attitudes towards authority, conceptions of self, relationships towards others and situations of uncertainty are dimensions of culture that differ according to context. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997, p.6) draw on the work of Schein (1985) to suggest that ‘culture is the way in which a group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas’; therefore, the culture of a group such as ES is divergent in relation to each individual yet defined by their collective response to the influence of intrinsic and extrinsic values. Although the values we espoused were ‘energy flows’ throughout the life of the project, it is not possible to state that they formed a consistent set of standards of judgement in founding the school. However, it is appropriate to suggest that the influence of intrinsic values, in establishing the culture of the group, was a form of ‘triple-loop learning’ (Wang and Ahmed, 2003, p.13) in that rather than moving directly from problem to resolution, values were influential in addressing assumptions, contradiction and in examining how to solve issues as they arose.

Therefore, it is an interpretive conclusion that the influence of values is relative to each person’s world view, which in turn means that values cannot form one standard set of cohesive criteria as standards of judgment in a given situation. However, they do act as explanatory principles and have an important influence in terms of practice. This juxtaposition explains how contradictions emerged, where intrinsic and extrinsic values and principles clashed in the pursuit of making progress. For example, one participant, R8 (Question One, survey), defined a value as a ‘trade off’, which implies the sacrifice of one principle for the sake of another. Whereas another, R11 (Question One, survey), said that values ‘seem to be the way we positively engage/treat others’. The former demonstrates a potential disregard for others (self-enhancing, extrinsic values) whilst the latter places relationships at the core of what values mean in terms of practice (self-transcending, intrinsic values). Therefore, whilst there was a general consensus within ES regarding a definition of values, at the same time there was divergence of individual opinions, which resulted in competing interests and the necessity for compromise in specific situations.

## **Interpretive Theme Two - Influence and values**

When values are ‘transmitted’, for example, by being passed from one generation to the next, they are influential in terms of action. The primary influence on the values of the participants was family life; either by parents or as parents. Family life was often depicted as a community of influence, either negative or positive, whereby people’s actions are influenced by the values inculcated as children (Theme Three, interviews). For example, R12 said, ‘family (my parents, my spouse, my children) has had a significant effect on my sense of: love, truth, caring right and wrong, etc. This more than anything else has helped to create and tune the values that are ME’. The process of socialisation within families has been discussed by an array of theorists; for example, functionalists (Murdoch, 1949), Marxists (Engels, 1884) and feminists (Delphy and Leonard, 1992). Yet, as suggested by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995), there is no binding way that pronounces what family, parenthood, marriage, sexuality or love mean as they ‘vary in substance, norms and morality from individual to individual and from relationship to relationship’. Thus, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the transmission of values within the family, but suffice it to say, the influence of parenthood and family life, whether negative or positive, is apparent from the accounts given by members of ES.

The second most influential source of values was education and schooling. Similarly the influence was either negative or positive or both. Regardless of the effect, the evidence suggests that values are transmitted in a way which affects the way we act. For example, R12, states, ‘school provided me with knowledge, understanding and academic rigour to debate, challenge and prove these values’. This concept of value transmission is supported by Whitehead and McNiff (2006, p.25) in relation to their identifying values as epistemological and ontological. Epistemologically values connect with rationality and knowledge and are forms of knowledge drawn from insights from others. These insights are then subsequently transmitted to others as a form of educational influence. Ontologically values are ‘flows of life affirming energy through which we give meaning and purpose to our lives’ (p.24), similarly these are passed from one person to another. The Spiritual, Moral, Social, Cultural development initiative in UK education (SMSC), comes the closest to providing a framework for values transfer in state-funded schools. However, the government stop short of calling it values education; despite its potential for dynamic influence in schools (see Paper Two, Appendix Three).

According to Whitehead and McNiff (2006), when one person communicates something to someone else, it is not a direct transfer of one mind to another. They suggest that we all have the capacity to choose and in light of this, those with educational influence, such as parents and teachers, act out their roles knowing that their students/children will filter their guidance in a creative manner. As they point out, this does not completely ameliorate abuse from corrupt teachers, parents and carers, but it emphasises the fact that those with an educational influence have a responsibility to encourage free thinking, creativity and independence. Examples from Question Five in the survey, demonstrate that the research participants valued concepts such as care, respect and independence and that it is those in positions of educational authority who have the greatest influence in transmitting these intrinsic values. However, Whitehead and McNiff are at pains to point out that the educational influence we accrue and then transmit is pointless unless put into practice, 'you have to have something to love and be loved in return, for love to mean anything at all' (2006, p.58). This resonates with Wetz's views on attachment and the vision of ES for the school, the transmission of values is central to the act of love, in promoting a learning culture that values concepts that enable human flourishing; care, respect, mutuality and independence. Promotion of such intrinsic values is love in action.

Love in this context is promoted as a concept of practice-based living theory. Hence, values such as love are important when they can be lived in the real world, rather than in abstract debates about educational research (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.59). The striking thrust of educational influence emerging from the findings was similar; values had influence when they were put into practice. This is aptly summarised by R12, (Question Five, survey) who cites the community itself as the 'opportunity to practice these values'. Similarly, R9, who is a nurse, said that her work has enabled her to 'show respect, love, compassion and kindness to others and the planet'.

Therefore, as practitioners work to improve their practice they create theories of educational influence. Whitehead and McNiff suggest that the imaginative responses to problems people face are based around the question 'how do I improve what I am doing' (2006, p.25). The answer to this question forms the basis of a living educational theory. Likewise, the responses from the participants suggested that members of ES used reflection to consider how they could improve what they did, influenced by their

values and using their values-based influence. For example, R11 mentions being creative with the development of their values; 'I think my values were moulded/encouraged by those adults around me when I was young'. There is a resonance with Whitehead and McNiff's ideas about epistemological and ontological values as the participants suggest that they glean their principles from the influence of others yet they creatively mould and shape (filter) them in order to give meaning and purpose to their lives.

However, practical theology throws another interpretive lens on the findings. Whereas Whitehead and McNiff base their interpretation of values on a western model, Veling poses another way of seeing how influence and values co-relate. Veling (2005, p.86) notes that it is interesting that much of western philosophy has centred on questions of ontology and epistemology. He points out that the Jewish tradition begins with 'we will do', a pattern of command and response, rather than 'belief and assent' (p.86). Veling explains that the Jewish imperative is action based; what should I do? Rather than knowledge based; what should I think? Veling suggests that Jewish influences are central to retrieving the 'practical sensibilities' of Christian theology (p.86). Interestingly, this interpretation concurs with Marx's theses on Feuerbach, in which he states 'the philosophers only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it' (Marx and Engels 1989, p.339).

These interpretations interest me in relation to the research findings. Several of the respondents mentioned the imperative for values to influence practice, to shape not just knowledge and how we see the world, but to guide action, particularly within the context of a community. For example, one respondent R12 (Question Five, survey) said, 'the community has not only provided me with the opportunity to practice these values but also to better understand the potential conflict that can arise from competing values'. Christian theology did not emerge from the research as a significant authority on values derived from the church community, although R12 described faith as 'a framework on which their values had been able to develop and grow'. However, what did emerge was a sense of subliminal influence as several respondents had been to church schools or grown up in a Christian family. Yet, most respondents stated that they derived their values more generally from those around them in the community, whether that was school, church, family or a wider social network. Veling suggests that communities (in



his context, Christian) are marked with ‘an essential quality’ where ‘conversation matters’ (2005, p.72). He suggests that it is in community where ‘people are bound together to speak of experiences that count, questions that weigh and issues that matter’ (p.73). It is in these communities that people are ‘discerning the way forward, through deliberation, conversation, and decision making in specific, local, concrete situations’ (p.73). In this sense ES became an intentional community, transmitting influence of intrinsic values from our past, through the present and on to the shared vision of the future; tracing the sacred in a community of influence.

Therefore, theoretical propositions can be drawn from the data in relation to intrinsic values being influenced and influential. In other words, the way ES created and transmitted values had a direct impact on our relationships with others and our action. As we ‘crafted’ our value system we formed criteria by which our work can be judged; our ‘being and doing’ in the world affected the people we lived and interacted with and in turn their values system interacted with ours and new cycles of values-based creativity emerged. This can be seen most directly from R11 who stated that she gleaned her values-based thinking not just from her family, schooling and community, but from external sources, for example, inspirational figures such as the Dalai Lama and action-based initiatives such as The Transition Movement (Question Five, survey). These, communities, individuals and institutions provided a platform for values transmission which respondents felt they could rely on and trust.

Furthermore, the concept of attachment provides reliability once values have been transmitted. Attachments enable us to provide a safe real-world context for values to have meaning. Wetz believes we are ‘held’ by those we are attached to. Our values are shaped and held in a context which is based on ‘understanding and tolerance, which has firm boundaries and which emphasises the importance of communication in relationships’ (2009, p.61). Interpretation of the data suggests that several participants felt ‘held’ in a context where their values thrived; within families, partnerships, schools and communities. In contrast, some participants explained that they flourished despite not being in a ‘holding’ environment, for example, in a dysfunctional family environment or an over authoritarian church school setting. One participant, R10, explained how moving on from his religious upbringing had liberated him ‘in teenage years experiencing the realisation that by freeing myself from the baggage of religion I

can be better' (Question Five, survey). These findings correspond with Wetz's thinking, that the influence of an attachment, or lack of attachment, to a 'holding' environment, has a strong influence in our lives.

The importance of people being 'held' in stable and secure environments, despite the fact that people can thrive without such stability is also central to Whitehead and McNiff (2006, p.58); 'we create our identities in terms of our attachments'. They stress that our lives 'as free and loving human beings' have to be in context of others if they are to make any sense; our values need to be seen 'in relation to others' (p.58). Furthermore, in order for values to work they need to be seen as real-life practices. However, this idyllic view needs to be weighed alongside the experiences of those who do not feel held, or want to escape the over-embrace of religion or domineering parents. From my perspective Whitehead, McNiff and Wetz are expressing an ideal, which is reflected in the idealism of ES, however, when values are held in relationships that respect others they are likely to have a positive influence especially when they are embedded in 'real-life practices' and not merely abstract idealised concepts (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.58). This does not mean flourishing cannot occur for other reasons, in cases where people succeed despite the odds.

### **Interpretive Theme Three - Emergent values in real-life practice**

The influence of values as explanatory principles in the context of real-life practice emerged upon reflection of specific examples given by the participants (Theme Two, interviews, Question Three, survey). In order to answer the research question, and draw interpretive conclusions from subsequent data, it was important to ask; to what extent did specific values emerge from ES and did the group 'own' the values that they talked about? As part of my interpretation, it is important to note that certain values were inculcated into the work of ES from the start of the project because the group was self selecting and happened to hold certain views at the outset. For example, human-scale and cooperative values, such as social justice, democracy, equality and sustainability were an influence on ES from an early stage. However, in order to explain the influence of values in the work of the group it is important to 'unearth' the authentic rather than assumed principles by identifying specific examples that emerged from the data, which revealed wide themes such as peacefulness, simplicity, freedom of speech and independence as being important to the participants. Additionally very specific

examples of intrinsic values emerged such as respect, honesty, integrity, kindness and loyalty. Furthermore, moral imperatives such as ‘treat others as you would like to be treated’ and ‘encourage others to be their best’ emerged. One value that was a direct link to the principles of human-scale education was the concept of ‘knowing children well’.

These intrinsic values sit well with Whitehead’s ideas about ontological and epistemological influences. The values given by the participants related to being and knowing. Whitehead and McNiff state that ontological values are foundational, giving direction to other values as they help us to understand how and why we live as we do (2006, p.86). They explain that ontological values commit us to ‘the universe and its inhabitants’ whilst epistemological values are characterised by testing of theory in asking, ‘how can we improve what we do?’ (p.86). Therefore, the intrinsic values espoused are ontological in nature as they reflect ideas that guide and give direction to us when we enact them. For example, the value of respect is ontological in the sense that it is concerned with inclusion and relationships. Ontological values are concerned with connections between ourselves and others, in this sense they are spiritual, for example, kindness, loyalty, integrity and honesty. These are the values that give meaning and purpose to our day-to-day actions and lend themselves to other overarching values that we enact, such as ‘treat others as you want to be treated’.

Epistemologically the values emerging from ES were aspirational and focused on our ‘common cause’; creating and testing knowledge as we worked towards founding the school. References to imperatives such as ‘encourage others to be their best’ and the importance of ‘knowing children well’ are examples of ES striving to create a school that would be tested by the theory of constantly asking, how can this be improved?

Whitehead and McNiff explain that we make such values ‘external and explicit’ through our ‘practices and theories’ (p.86). Therefore it is possible to claim that the work of ES, when made external and explicit, was put into practice in the form of a living educational theory in the form of the school. The theory is living in the sense that the practice of ES, through the analysis of this research, explains how values are influential in developing ourselves as practitioners, in developing relationships with others that we came into contact with and in terms of creating social transformation and change in

community. Therefore, the work of ES, in the founding of TSS, emerges from the data as a living educational theory as the intrinsic values are put into action. However, this still begs the question; how do such values influence action?

#### **Interpretive Theme Four – why and how values influence action**

Before exploring how values influence action, it is important to establish and understand the context in which ES were operating; why were people motivated to act in the first place? The data suggests there were a number of reasons why members of ES felt it was important to take action, in light of the closure of the local middle school. First, several respondents stated that they had joined ES for the sake of the community and the well-being of the town. Their response was not specifically confined to education but rooted in the desire for Swanage to be economically, socially and environmentally viable, sustainable and vital. Others expressed the desire to make a contribution in light of the Purbeck Review of Schools, whereby ES was able to make a community-based response to a lack of consultation over secondary education. R11 had specific educational reasons for becoming involved, for example, to help children by creating a school based on the ‘humanity of scale’ (Wetz, 2009), (Theme Six, interviews, Question Nine, survey).

In relation to how they were influential, values were referred to as being authoritative in terms of their relationship to action. All respondents stated that they were central to decision making. R2 remarked that they were powerful, to some extent deterministic, even when operating at a sub-conscious level (Question One, survey). Furthermore, acting out values was linked to ethical concepts, such as duty and utility. On one hand values were perceived as intrinsic and deontological in nature; guiding duty for duty’s sake, regardless of the outcome; imperatives that must be followed. On the other, values were perceived as relative and teleological; instrumental in specific situations and contexts where the outcome is a measure of practical utility based on the consequences. On occasion the two perspectives were seen as compatible, for example, love, as a duty, might guide action in a specific situation where the outcome can be measured in practice (Theme One, interviews, Question One, survey). The contrast between views on whether values are conceptual or practical was also revealing in terms of why and how they influence action; with all participants expressing a practical purpose for them.

For example, D described them as ‘yard sticks’ (Theme Five, interviews) and E as ‘measures to weigh up how true one is being to one’s values’.

The most striking outcome from the data in terms of how values ‘behaved’ was that they seemed to be most influential when a response was required to something which contradicted them. Values were seen to be influential as operational standards of judgement in a given context, as a means of enabling compromise and as a method to lessen the impact of contradiction. The data suggests that an important aspect of how values were influential is to do with the relationship between contradiction, compromise and congruence. In the context of ES, they were successfully operational when there was agreement between personal and group values. However, they were most influential when contradiction threatened such congruence. It was the influence of values that enabled congruence when situations of contradiction arose, through compromise. This process enabled progress to be made, even though the ‘behaviour’ of values led to conflict amidst contradiction. The process involved conversation that addressed individual’s assumptions, advocated new ways forward and asked critical questions that demanded a response from others: these are conversations based on ‘action inquiry’, where discussions are framed in such a way as to improve and transform how organisations operate (Torbert, Fisher and Rooke 2003, p.20).

### **Interpretive Theme Five – The influence of values in contradiction**

How values influenced our work in the face of contradiction is an important element of living theory. Although our values were often in congruence with our practice, it was particularly by working through contradictions that we made progress. Whereas philosophical theorist Popper (1963) discredited the role of contradiction in dialectics, preferring propositional modes of theory, Whitehead and McNiff speak of ‘living logics’ (2006, p.39) as logical, inclusional fields of enquiry that ‘see future potential within present forms’ (p.39). This is an imaginative action inquiry based approach which embraces the form of contradiction as a transformational process of change. However, they also caution that ‘living logics’ can be risky as ‘you are always on the brink, never knowing what the next step will be’ (p.40); living in a liminal context is risky. On the other hand, a commitment to learning requires this kind of risk whether it relates to developing personal identity, relationships or social transformation. According to Whitehead and McNiff this risk-based approach to life commits us to ‘creative

impulses of our own learning’ and to ‘the vision quest of generating new theories’ (p.40). By identifying the contradictions within the practice of ES I have come to a better understanding of how values have influenced my own personal development, the relationships of those in the group and the founding of a new school.

Analysis of the data resulted in ten internal contradictions being identified, often exemplifying the distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic values. These were presented to and discussed with the validation group, who affirmed that the list was a fair reflection of their experiences as members of ES:

1. Personal conflicts within the group contradicted the desire to have honest and respectful conversations when issues arose.
2. The forcefulness of some individuals contradicted the value of respecting others’ self-esteem and confidence.
3. The business-mindedness of some individuals contradicted the philosophical-mindedness of others.
4. There was a contradiction in the sense that some people were ‘thinkers’ and others were ‘feelers’.
5. There was a contradiction between personal values and the institutional values of the group. Sometimes personal values were not in line with the ‘agreed’ values of the group, therefore causing more conflict and less cooperation.
6. At times external influences contradicted the shared values of the group, causing doubt about the collective ethos.
7. Values related to ‘holding’ others in a nurturing and caring sense seemed to be in contrast to putting such values into practice and being selfish.
8. At times values seemed to work in contradiction rather than congruence even though the group worked at its best when there was a strong correspondence of values.
9. Differences in personality sometimes caused conflict, making it difficult to build consensus.
10. The organisation of ES became hierarchical yet some people felt this contradicted a desire for a flatter structure, which would have been more democratic.

If values are explanatory principles that influence action as standards of judgement in founding the school, then the examples of contradiction help to explore how they influenced our actions. The values that lay beneath these conflicts formed a scaffold for our 'energy flow' in finding resolution. Once the conflict had arisen and the tension had emerged from the contradiction of values, ES 'crafted' a way forward in the framing of critical conversations. The relationship with 'the other' was crucial to how individuals acted and this facilitated our processes of interaction. We were involved in a process of 'methodological inventiveness' in order to develop and deepen our understanding of ourselves, each other and the social transformation we were enacting. However, in our search to develop more equal and democratic processes we faced conflict with each other. Our aim was to be more 'inclusional and relational' (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.25) in order to develop 'emancipatory practices' and yet it came at the price of threatening our self-identity, relationships with each other and the future of the project. On the other hand, although our conflicts caused tension, we were able to reflect on each situation in order to improve it. Through struggling to articulate our values we sought to improve our practice and the situation we were in. We eventually managed to, as Veling (2005) puts it, 'listen to the other'.

### **Interpretive Theme Six - Congruence and influence of values**

Having established the importance of working through contradictions in order to live in accordance with values, it is worth noting that when there was congruence of values there was most efficiency in relation to action; decision making and change happened more quickly and smoothly. When we worked in small groups, for example, to decide on the uniform or which IT system the school would have, we were more efficient. As an 'intentional community' ES worked best and were most influential when personal and group values were in congruence. In spite of numerous challenges and contradictions in relation to practice the group held onto a shared purpose of achieving the school. There was a 'hopeful direction' within the group which enabled it to move forward and make progress even in the face of adversity. However, had it not been for the influence of values in working through contradiction, there would not have been such a high degree of congruence, even if it took time to reach it. Therefore, values were most influential as a means to overcoming contradiction; they were a transformational dimension of practice.

Finding congruence was not easy as there was always an edge of tension within the group; to some extent a division between those who seemed to have the most power and those who did not. This distinction emerged from the data and helps to explain the disparity in group discussions and conversations when contradictions emerged. Those who felt they were listened to perceived affirmation in their influence. However, those who did not perceive affirmation expressed a lack of confidence in their role (Question Ten, survey). This interpretive conclusion is a challenge to the operational merits of ES's work as a living educational theory. How can the intrinsic values of the group be explanatory principles in terms of self-identity, relationship with others and social transformation if there is an element of disillusionment and disaffection within the group as a community?

My answer to that question is that our humanity makes this tension inevitable. Therefore, when we acknowledge this element of our existence and challenge our practice in light of it, that is when we make the most progress in terms of improving what we do and that is when our values work through contradiction to build congruence. Our humanity leads us to regard 'the other' within a context of, as Veling describes it, metanoia. I explored this concept in Paper One (Appendix Two) from a theoretical perspective, yet now, coming back to it and reflecting on real-life practice, it is more poignant. For Veling, metanoia involves the ability to have a 'change of heart' (Veling, 2005, p58). It also involves creativity, taking risks, what he calls 'living in the margins'. He stresses that intentionality can be about change, therefore his ideas resonate with my discussion point; metanoia has to be sought through marginal acts that embrace risk, tension and address contradiction. However, if this risk taking does not include listening to the other then we might as well not bother to strive for change. During the conversation with the validation group I raised the concept of liminality (Meyer and Land, 2006) explaining that in some respects we were standing at the threshold of change and the process of transformation was like 'living in the margins of our own lives' (Chapter Five, validation group dialogue).

Our liminal existence was a process of working through change and decision making, from contradiction to congruence, with intrinsic values acting as the transforming influence in our lives. Liminality is a sense of not knowing, being uncertain, unclear about the future and being destabilized. Our analysis of feelings in such a state of flux



influences our perceptions about the future. A constant and underlying concept in my analysis is transitional change, which accounts for what ES did and how members handled the move from the previous to the new. Bridges' distinction is important here, that there is a nuance between 'change' and 'transition' (Bridges, 1991). Whereas change is something that happens to people even though they may not agree with it, transition is an internal process, which happens more slowly, akin to a transformation. ES experienced a process of transition in founding the school; the changes that emerged were transitional in the sense that they happened over a period of time yet were transformational. There was radical, transformational change within us, in our relationships to each other and in the community as a response to the influence of the intrinsic values that shaped our progress towards achieving our cause.

### **Summary**

This chapter has explored how values, as explanatory principles of practice, influenced change and decision making. First, a relationship was established between the theoretical perspectives and literature that informed the research design. Second, interpretive themes that emerged from the data were discussed in order to illustrate how values, particularly intrinsic values, were influential in the practice of ES, especially in response to contradiction.

Throughout the discussion conceptual conclusions have emerged that warrant consideration in order to establish a relationship with the interpretive themes. The conceptual discussion will be addressed in the next chapter and will explore the relationships between the theoretical perspectives used to design the research and the conclusions and propositions emerging from the analysis. The chapter will provide a direct answer to the research question in explaining how values influenced the work of ES in establishing TSS as a living educational theory.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT- DISCUSSION OF CONCEPTUAL CONCLUSIONS**

### **Introduction**

For The Swanage School and the work of ES to be a living educational theory, conceptual links need to be established between the interpretation of the findings and the theoretical framework. In this chapter conclusions are discussed in relation to the fields of conceptual enquiry that informed the research from the beginning. Therefore, this final discussion chapter, set in the wider context of educational transition, supports my claim to knowledge from a conceptual perspective. First, if this research is to be regarded as practical theology the discussion must demonstrate congruence with conceptual insights from that discipline. Second, if the work of ES and TSS is to be regarded as a living educational theory, by acting as an explanation of values-based influence, the research must be congruent with conceptual thinking from living theory.

In Paper One (Appendix Two) I quoted from Bob Dylan's song, 'Every Grain of Sand', with reference to how our lives are held in tension between ourselves, others and the sacred:

I hear the ancient footsteps like the motion of the sea  
sometimes I turn, there's someone there, other times it's only me.  
I am hanging in the balance of the reality of man  
like every sparrow falling, like every grain of sand.  
(Dylan, Shot of Love, 1981)

I suggested that the tensions of our lives become more bearable when they are held in balance, yet, like walking a tightrope, without the tension we would fall. Values, as standards of judgement for action in our lives, can influence and hold the tension when the dualities, dichotomies and contradictions of life cause imbalance. The reality of our situation is often held in equilibrium through the influence of values; in our search for our personal identity, deep relationships and ways in which we can transform the communities in which we live. For me, living is a journey to 'trace' the sacred, for others this may be interpreted as spiritual search to find God, the divine or a 'golden thread'; whatever the interpretation, this exploration is the essence of being human. Regardless of how far one extends the circle of influence, the evidence suggests there is a conceptual connection between the influence of values and how they 'hold' the equilibrium of our lives, as we cross from one experience to the next.

In his seminal work Barnard (1938) said that the survival of an organisation depends upon ‘the maintenance of an equilibrium of complex character in a continuously fluctuating environment of physical, biological, and social materials, elements and forces, which calls for re-adjustment of processes internal to the organisation’ (p.6). He implies that through cooperation organisations can accomplish more than individuals operating alone. So it was with ES, as we evolved into a cooperative organisation that learnt how to maintain equilibrium, influenced by the fluctuating forces of values. The contradictions caused by the interplay of various dichotomies and dualities; for example the interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic, espoused and enacted, terminal and instrumental, epistemological and ontological values, dwelt at the heart of our *living*.

Practical theologians, such as Ganzevoort, and Veling, are interested in *living* theologically, Whitehead and McNiff are interested in *living* in accordance with values and Wetz is interested in *living* out the principle of the primacy of relationships. They are conceptually linked to each other and to the research findings in that they all relate to how values influence the story of our lives, through critical conversations and action inquiries, which provide a safety net for the anxious walk across the metaphorical tightrope. The story of the journey, bearing these concepts and theories in mind, becomes the living educational theory, in this case the work of ES and the founding of The Swanage School.

The journey for me as a researcher has been tense and nerve-wracking; at times I have experienced a personal sense of imbalance. Yet, in constructing a claim that sets the practice of ES in the context of a living educational theory, I have ‘ventured forth’ (Heidegger, 1971, p.102-103) despite the risks. My journey, and that of my colleagues, has tipped one way and the other but we have been held in balance by the influence of our intrinsic values in relation to our ‘common cause’ and the belief in what we were doing; that it had meaning in our lives and in the lives of others. As Dylan says, on one hand we were left hanging, yet on the other we were held; supported yet exposed to risk. It was the interplay and influence of values that held the tension; the balancing of self-transcendent over self-enhancing values, ultimately enabled us to continue crossing over to a new realisation; our collective dream of the school, which always provided our focus at the end of the rope.

This relationship between tension and risk derived from the liminal context of our practice as we worked on the threshold of educational transition in the UK. As more free schools and academies open, the nature of state-funded education is changing. Pring (2013, p.i), a distinguished professor of education, acknowledges that the old patterns of schooling are less and less suitable for facing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, however, he is cautious about future models being based on standards, testing and assessment. He is sceptical of free school initiatives with their profit-making sponsors. Nevertheless, Pring has long been interested in developing state education that is ‘for all’ (Pring and Pollard, 2011). The vision he depicts outlines a ‘life and death’ crisis for education in the UK; something has to change. Rather than build on the industrial model of the past he believes that sound educational modelling must involve moral seriousness, respect for all children and deep learning that incorporates practical education; bringing a child’s experience of the world to the classroom (Benn, 2012, *The Guardian*). This suggests that a turn to intrinsic values is important in realising a brighter future for generations to come. The Free School policy may not be the preferred launch pad for Pring’s dream becoming reality, yet the vision for TSS meets his criteria; a model for schooling where children are known well, where assessment is authentic and learning builds on real-life, community-based experiences. If education is in a liminal context, The Swanage School, as a living educational theory, is a model for how the transformation could be shaped, how the threshold could be crossed.

As a living educational theory, grounded in the humanity of scale with values that represent attributes related to respect, dignity and community-mindedness, the work of ES and the foundation of TSS addressed how young people must be educated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is an imagined future that we want to become a practical reality. However, caution needs to be taken as the contradiction of the free school policy and other government initiatives may in fact thwart the dream of a ‘possible world’ where effective human-scale education becomes that living reality. Therefore, the claim I am making, that intrinsic values are an effective influence for educational change, is shaped with reference to key concepts from the research process and propositions for others to test.

The conceptual discussion is framed around four themes:

1. Practical theology: 'Tracing the sacred' as a player and commentator;
2. Values and their influence;
3. Living educational theory – propositions to test;
4. The Swanage School – an imagined future of expanding horizons.

### **Practical theology**

#### **'Tracing the sacred' as a 'player'**

In order to find resilience as a research 'player', whilst simultaneously juggling my professional and personal responsibilities, I found time to 'write in the midst of chaos' (McLemore, 2007); living, working and writing in the middle of what seemed like the margins of my own existence. Drawing on practical wisdom of others and developing values-based habits in relation to my practice helped me cope with the demands.

Although not subscribing to a specific faith, theology provided a means of relating to the world and led to my interest in practical theology. Analysis of the conceptual congruence of my research with practical theology is a reflection on my own spiritual journey. Poetic reflections in Chapter One are a form of practical theology as they inspire action. As Veling (2013, p.i) states, 'the practical and the poetical are intimately linked' (2005, p.194). He explains that poetry is *poiesis*, 'an exploration of the human powers to make a world in which we may poetically dwell' (p.194). Veling quotes Rich who claims that poetry can 'break open locked chambers of possibility, restore numbed zones to feeling, recharge desire' (p.195).

'The Bright Field' poem was a catalyst for this doctoral research; it recharged a desire within me to break open 'chambers of possibility' that for whatever reason had been numbed. There is poignancy in the symbolism of the poem that connects to my theological heritage and stimulates a refusal to accept living in contradiction, personally and professionally. The concept of not hankering after the past nor hurrying towards the future, but rather turning aside to the here and now, to the 'field' that is right under our noses, which has the treasure in it, which we should do everything we can to possess, are powerful metaphors (Thomas, 1975). Traversing the journey as a 'player' has enabled me to feel attached to the 'golden thread' that reaches back to the past and onto an imagined future, whilst feeling obliged to 'turn aside' in the present; to act, in order that a brighter future becomes a reality.

Gaanzevoort claims that practical theology involves finding a trace of the sacred by evoking passion and awe in our lives. Although the theological reflections in this study will not create long-term theories, a 'living theory' is created in the form of an explanation of how values act as principles. Working in collaboration with others, as in the context of ES, a 'living theory' is created through my explanation of how intrinsic values acted as principles in building relationships with others and transforming the community in which we live. Nevertheless, we live in a world where we can tip one way or another on that imaginary tightrope, a metaphor which reflects the very essence of being human, of living. If our living theories can help us to hold the tense balance then they can be powerful stories of educational influence, characterised by sacred qualities evoking us to act in transformational ways that create patterns of meaning around us.

Whilst institutionalised religion does not have an explicit influence on my life as a living theory, I find resonance with Ganzevoort's (2009, p.3) definition of religion as 'the transcending patterns of action and meaning embedded in and contributing to the relation with the sacred'. There is at least some common ground with living theory creation. I have an understanding of the sacred and its patterns that are embedded in the experience and meaning of life as it is, without believing in God, or setting apart 'the sacred' from 'the profane'. On the contrary, that trace of the sacred and the patterns it creates is interrelated to all aspects of the world as I experience it. This is not a 'secular' world, where the sacred is set apart, but an interconnected living experience where our self-transcendence weaves the patterns of meaning as we respond to the influence of intrinsic values over their more selfish, extrinsic, self-enhancing counterparts. This investigation is practical theology because it is a study of how I and others have lived and created patterns of meaning in relation to what our lives gravitate towards, what evokes in us a sense of awe and passion, what it means to be living a 'sacred' life.

This has been a process of discovery and my understanding of the influence of values has been 'unearthed' in traversing the 'forks in the road'. Furthermore, by examining the influences of values within ES, and 'turning aside' to trace the thread of what that influence means, I have also commentated on the work of ES as a living educational theory. In this regard I have been a passionate yet partial, analyst of the story.

### **‘Tracing the sacred’ as a ‘commentator’**

Practical theology requires engagement with hermeneutics, in order to ‘study the field of lived religion’ (Ganzevoort, 2009, p.4). It requires an interpretation of life in the form of the construction of meaning. The hermeneutical approach has been to explain and interpret the influence of values through the lens of theological reflection, like a commentator in Ganzevoort’s sports analogy. This has involved discernment of the participants’ encounters with values and how they influenced the work of ES. In my role as commentator, I have analysed and interpreted the influence of values as if they are ‘avatars’ of the sacred, in our lives. In the context of this research, values represented real dimensions of life that influenced action and meaning in the world. By studying the patterns these values created, it was possible to sketch a trace of the sacred and inter-weave it with Whitehead and McNiff’s (2006) concept of creating a living educational theory. An explanation of values as educational influences on our self-identity, in our relationships with others and in transforming society provides a pattern of meaning that can be described as ‘religious’.

Furthermore, it was possible to trace the influence of values in a way that provided meaningful propositions for others to test. Values infused the journey with meaning; their influence was transformational in our personal identities, our relationships with each other and in creating change in the community. In this sense the method of the research had a liberating purpose (*telos*), by explaining the work of ES as a dynamic form of awareness that acted as a living influence on founding the school. Therefore it is possible to sketch a living educational theory from the story of ES, whereby intrinsic values have created knowledge and flows of energy, giving meaning and purpose to the world. These values have an educational influence as explanatory principles in our lives.

### **Values and their influence**

As already explored, the influence of values often operates in a dichotomous tension, between the espoused and enacted, intrinsic and extrinsic, terminal and instrumental. However, when there is a common cause, a shared ambition, for example, in our case, the school itself, it is possible for the dichotomy to be reconciled by focusing on the influence of intrinsic values which enable conflict and contradiction to be worked through on a daily basis.

Often values seemed buried in contradiction, as if desecrated, by conflict. Yet, ironically, it was in these situations they were at their most influential. In a state of ‘desecration’ they had more meaning. In the depths of conflict intrinsic values influenced resolution. When the values of ES were pitted against an internal issues or external contradiction, the manner in which they influenced the process of reaching congruence, always involved conflict, conversation and compromise. Unearthing values, amidst contradiction, seemed to release their potency, as they influenced our work to trace the path to congruence. It was the intrinsic values that held the tension on the tightrope as they threaded their way through five key concepts; contradiction, conflict, conversation, compromise and congruence, in order to influence change and at times, transformation.

The continual weaving in and out of these cycles of influence eventually paved the way to create the ‘common cause’ of the school. The school itself was always the focus at the end of the tightrope, the *telos*, or purpose of the journey, at the same time it encompassed the journey itself. In turn the school also represents our living theory; the explanation of how epistemological (knowledge creating) and ontological (energy flowing) intrinsic values were influential and appropriate standards of judgement against which to validate our work. The hope is that the school will create an ongoing educational influence as others use it as a measure against which to test their own values, in light of the propositions arising from this research.

Intrinsic values evoke ethical action on behalf of passions and motivations in life whilst also being transcendent, existing beyond ourselves; in this sense they relate to the sacred. However, there needs to be caution when relying on such an understanding, for example, how do the actions of terrorists or those who commit atrocities in the name of their ‘sacred values’ sit with this investigation? The answer lies in the definition of values. Our lives gravitate around a range of values and our response to them depends on our cultural context, which evokes a variety of responses and prompts us to act in different ways. Schwartz’s research demonstrated that values are universal, and therefore it is possible to ‘desecrate’ them, depending on our cultural response and thereby reduce the sacred quality of certain ‘value-based’ action. Consequently, an act of terrorism or of sexual abuse (Lynch, 2012, p.54) violates the understanding of specific values, such as trust and respect, regardless of the cultural context one is



operating in. The sacred quality of the influence of values is lost, desecrated, when intrinsic values are violated. In order for society to be based on trust and respect, self-enhancing values (for example, seeking power over others) cannot take precedence over self-transcending values (for example, trusting others). It is when patterns of meaning emerge from the evocation of self-transcending, intrinsic values that a sacred quality is ‘unearthed’ in how people act.

In my understanding these patterns of meaning of intrinsic values create a process of balance, akin to Rawls’s ‘reflective equilibrium’, (Rawls, 1971, p.48), where one weighs up one’s beliefs and principles to create a sense of coherence and harmony in relation to how one acts in the world. When conflict or contradiction arises, values are influential as measures of judgement, which help to adjust behaviour; they are practical guides in creating balance, equilibrium, in interaction and conversation with others and in the context in which we live. It is the influence of these patterns, between the intrinsic and extrinsic values, which creates the sacred quality when grappling with moral issues, not the values *per se*.

### **The work of ES and TSS as a living educational theory –propositions to test**

The patterns of meaning that were created through the work of ES in founding TSS is a living educational theory. The influence of values, as explanatory principles and standards of judgement, are measures against which our work can be tested.

Propositions derived from this living theory can be tested by others in similar contexts. Primarily the audience is educational practitioners, the academy and society, however, these propositions are relevant to any individuals and organisations who are grappling with issues in relation to their values; any values-based groups and institutions in society who have a ‘common cause’.

### **Proposition One**

#### **The Golden Thread (tracing the sacred) enables a process of change**

Values influenced the work of ES by ‘leading’ us through a process from contradiction to transitional change (Bridges, 1991). This process is represented graphically in Figure 8.1. The model identifies issues within a specific relationship, in the context of ES. It is explicit in combining various concepts within a unified whole, which reduces complexity to an understandable pattern of relationship. It satisfies Hutton’s

categorization of theories, whereby he explains how models serve one or more function; explanatory, heuristic, operative, orienting or reductive (Hutton, 1972). He says that 'the highest test of a theory is to show that it, and no other, can logically specify the outcome of empirical observations' (1972, p.18-20). This model, showing The Swanage School as a living educational theory, is explanatory, orienting and operative in function. It has an explanatory function that helps bring order to what otherwise could be disconnected items of information (orienting). The model helps further investigation through a conceptual framework (operative). It could also be seen to have a heuristic function in that it suggests/guides research based on a valid proposition.

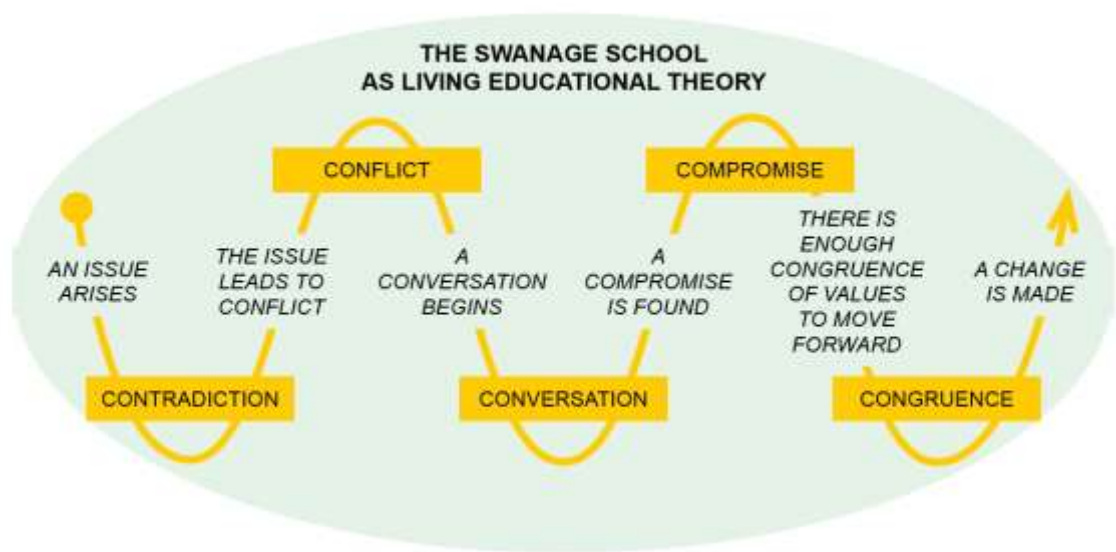


Figure 8.1 The Swanage School as a Living Educational Theory

Using the model is justified in that it displays levels of analysis that relate to the design and outcomes of the research. Nadler (1980, p.125-127) provides a series of tests to help the researcher justify the use of models; having explicitness, being theory-based, being operationally defined, being empirically validated, having 'face' validity and having parameters of 'generalisability', are all tests that must be established. The model can be successfully measured against Nadler's tests. First it demonstrates 'explicitness' in how the influence of intrinsic values threads through a number of variables that are related; contradiction, conflict, conversation, compromise, congruence and change. The fact that all except one of the conceptual words begin with 'co' is not coincidental but relates to the importance of togetherness in community (derived from the Latin word *cum* meaning 'with'). This relates to the primacy of relationships as a central value, (see

Proposition Two). The 'golden' arrow represents the influence of values, as they thread their way through the process of transitional change.

Second, the model is 'theory based' as it relates to living educational theory as an explanation of how values influenced transitional change. The shaded oval shape, which encompasses the image, represents the 'common cause' aspirational value, in this case, the school. Third, the model is 'operationally defined' as it is designed to be robust when tested against operational criteria in other specified operational contexts, for example, by other free school proposer groups. The presumptions in the model are also 'empirically valid' as they reflect the observed operation of the group and the model makes sense in the real world of organisational life; according to Nadler's test, it has 'face validity'. Finally, although there are limitations in transferring the model to other settings, it would be effective within specific parameters and is therefore, to a limited extent, 'generalisable'.

However, the model has flaws. It could be argued that it is possible to find congruence straight away therefore the model becomes redundant. This is a reasonable point; however it is designed with situations of conflict in mind, to explain how the influence of values can help to deal with situations of 'value difference' in other words, contradiction. It may be that conflict is not an inevitable part of contradiction, for example, a group may sign up to a set of values at the start of a project and when difference emerges they follow a logical decision-making process based on their ascribed values. However, the model is designed with other situations in mind, where groups like ES have formed randomly and are made up of a diverse range of individuals. Therefore, the model stands as an explanation of how values influenced the work of ES and that through action reflection and inquiry individuals and groups can 'frame' their conversations to enact transformation. By addressing assumptions arising in conflicts and contradictory situations, people can affect change by holding critical conversations that ask 'how can we improve what we are doing?' Values influence such conversations by providing criteria against which to judge developments in thinking, for example, 'does the intervention suggested meet the criteria of respecting others?' As a proposition this can be tested in values based settings.

## **Proposition Two**

### **The primacy of relationships is a core intrinsic value**

The primacy of relationships was an important intrinsic value in the work of ES and in the research process. When there is a focus on building positive relationships the influence of values and the process of change are more effective. ES considered how human-scale values could be put into practice by ensuring that one of the distinguishing features of the school is that relationships are at the heart of the vision, ethos and organisation of learning. For example, by providing staff with a firm grounding and understanding in child development, attachment and the emotional factors in teaching and learning the intention is for children to be known well by their teachers. The primacy of relationships is core to effective personal development as human beings and to the success of any values based organisation.

ES integrated Wetz's (2009) model of the 'Urban Village School' into the fabric of the new school building, to ensure that even in the design of the physical environment, relationships can be enhanced. For example, spaces such as the central forum are open-plan, for multi-purpose, interdisciplinary use. The classrooms link to 'break-out' spaces for small group and one-to-one sessions. Outside there is a permaculture garden and areas where learning can promote relationships in alternative spaces to the conventional classroom.

Primarily, the relational base of the school is strong so that children feel known. Teaching and learning are fundamentally relational activities. The design of the curriculum at TSS acknowledges this and has a personalised, 'small school' approach, for example, learning is often project-based, hence more engaging and interactive for students. Parents are closely involved and the local area is rooted in the curriculum and authentic assessment, developing the relational dynamic between the community and the school. The aim is for the school to be connected to the real world, socially relevant and engaging; the primacy of relationships is the lynchpin to success.

## **Proposition Three**

### **Identify the liminal context and develop strategies for living in the margins**

It is important to establish the liminal context of the work which values will influence. For ES this required reflection in order to identify the transitional context we were

operating in. Awareness of the transient nature of the context enables individuals and groups to develop strategies for coping. Even though Gantt charts and risk registers were developed for our multi-faceted project, little prepared us for the turmoil of the changing nature of the educational and political landscape, or the ups and downs of the internal dynamic of the group which affected decision making at every level of our work.

This state of flux, weighed in the balance of our lives, resulted in a marginalised existence for us. We lived on the margins of our lives. Veling describes this aptly:

We need to know the ways of belonging and non-belonging to recognize that in reality the two reside together in a space of continual to-and-fro: the space of the margins. (1996, p.135)

He describes the Jewish technique of ‘writing in the margins’ (Veling, 1996, p.137) and relates this to intentional communities who ‘would rather surrender to the shifting flux than to the settled order’ (p.167). He explains that such work is ‘nomadic’ because ‘being on the way feels more hopeful than the settled truth of having already arrived’ (p.167). Ours was a nomadic journey, but despite the liminality and marginality, or rather, because of it, we travelled in a hopeful direction which perhaps others will follow.

These three propositions are established for others to test, rather than presented as generalisations. The part values played in influencing praxis was a central dimension to the outcome for ES. According to Groome (1991, ch.1), it is in the uniting of epistemological and ontological values, knowing and being, that leads to richer meaning in educational praxis. Knowledge of the world and being in the world are knitted together, inter-woven, as our values thread, trace and sketch a path towards a hopeful future. It is a sacred journey.

The metaphorical concept of a journey, a flow from one thing to another, from influence to action, fits with the pursuit I undertook as well as remaining consistent with the findings of the seminal work of Rokeach and Schwartz. The extent to which the influence of the values of ES were intrinsic or extrinsic, conscious or unconscious, espoused or enacted, were all worthy contenders for exploration. However, it was the question of how values influenced our journey through life, in terms of our day to day

living, in relation to our dreams and aspirations that interested me the most. I wanted to explore how those dreams and aspirations, our flourishing, might link to the everydayness of our lives and the part values played in connecting the two, despite the conflict and contradictions that were involved in their interaction, when the dualistic interplay between values and their influence collided with each other. Ultimately it was the intrinsic values that held the balance and created the sacred patterns, without the ability to self-transcend, as individuals or as a group, our values are impotent in creating positive transformational change.

By investigating the journey, from unearthing values to founding the school, I have been able to use reflections from practical theology to inform the development of my living educational theory. As stated by the authors of the Index of Inclusion values ‘spur us forward, give us a sense of direction and define a destination’ (2014). The theory that is advanced within this work is fluid and dynamic, ‘living’, whilst also being situated in a particular context of space, time and perspective, all of which has a destination in mind. Tweed suggests that;

Theories are ‘embodied travels’ (a line or course of travel; route), positioned representations (a record or journal of travel, an account of a journey), and proposed routes (a sketch of a proposed route; a plan or scheme of travel) (2008, Location 105).

Throughout this research journey I have developed a living theory that establishes an ‘embodied travel’ between the influence of intrinsic values in everyday life and the aspirational, cause-based values they help to shape. This thesis includes an account of how values influenced actions in relation to personal identity, relationships with others and transformational action in community, in order to realise the aspirations shared by a group and to contribute to the flourishing of the values that carry hope for humanity. Furthermore, I am proposing a suggested route that the journey of our everyday lives could take, as our intrinsic values influence the transformational actions we undertake as we dwell in the world as a sacred space. The patterns that emerge (are unearthed, made visible) as values interact in conflict and congruence, enable us to cross over from the merely functional, physical, biological nature of our humanity to dwell in a deeper understanding of the meaning and purpose of being human. In this sense it is a spiritual pursuit to trace the sacred.

Schwartz points out that ‘spirituality’ came close to inclusion in his list of universal values. He states that ‘the defining goal of spirituality is meaning, coherence, and inner harmony through transcending everyday reality’ and that ‘if finding ultimate meaning is a basic human need, then spirituality might be a distinct value found in all societies’ (2007, p.7). However, in the end Schwartz decided that there was not a consistency of meaning of spirituality across cultures and that without this it could not be included in his values theory, despite its importance in many societies. I am not claiming that Schwartz should reconsider the theoretical position of spirituality in his work, but I am suggesting that whilst our lives are shaped and steered by the influence of values, albeit intertwined between their competing intrinsic and extrinsic qualities, which create patterns of meaning in our interactions with others and the global society in which we live, there is a connection to a spiritual or sacred dimension that is worth investigating in an inductive research project such as this. However, this is not a traditionally religious pursuit to disclose the influence of values in relation to the sacred, but an attempt to trace the patterns of meaning that values can sketch, as we journey through our lives to achieve our ambitions, goals and dreams.

This is not a tidy journey but a messy one. The thread of influence that values weave, often through the polarities of our lives, creates a diversity of responses from each individual, even as they strive to achieve a common cause. Fisher, Rooke and Torbert (2003, p.165) describe how individuals adopt different ‘frames’, such as ‘strategist’ and ‘achiever’ as we traverse through the journey of our lives. Ultimately, the frame they promote as being the one most capable of initiating transformation, either personally or within an organisation, is the ‘alchemist’, who is capable of recognising the ‘polarisation between good and evil – between victory and defeat, between the sacred and the profane’. The alchemist works within a process of action inquiry to bring about transformation despite opposing forces that exist; action inquiry is ‘not so much a theory of managing, as an ongoing jousting, at one and the same time, with one’s own attention and with the outside world’ (p.166).

Similarly the propositions suggested as the outcome of this research operate within an action inquiry frame, with alchemy in mind; to weave a ‘golden thread’ between oneself and the ‘outside world’. Through being mindful of the influence of values (the golden thread), the primacy of relationships and the liminal context in which we work, it is

possible to transform our living, and become part of a movement of change that is 'liberating, flexible and self-transforming' (p.186). However, as Pattison states (2004, p. 3), 'all that glitters is not gold' and the belief that somehow the influence of values will always form a virtuous foundation for social order is an illusion. In reality the alchemist is responsible for being 'present' and 'working at' being influenced by values to create order; they need to listen to the patterns of meaning that emerge from the interactions and critical conversations of our lived experience:

the lives of individuals conversing, of the particular organisational setting where the conversation is occurring, and of still wider historical circumstances as radiating from the past and the future into the only time when awareness and action are possible: this inclusive present (p.166).

As a complete and whole hearted commitment to this world, a small community group in Swanage became alchemists and imagined a hopeful future, which radiated from the past, by becoming an intentional, inquiring, developmental community of change, focused on being 'present' in their everyday lives, for the sake of the future. Through the influence of our values and the patterns of meaning they created, our common cause was realised in the creation of the school, which for me has become a living sacred space.

However, as Torbert, Rooke and Fisher state, it is rare for a school to operate as a community of transformational inquiry; instead they are more like 'places of incarceration' (p.186). Although we may assume schools are founded on the premise of cultivating transforming action inquiry, few actually do. Therefore, the ultimate challenge for ES was to create a school as a developmental educational community that engenders a spirit of inquiry and a hopeful future.



## The Swanage School – a hopeful imagined future of expanding horizons



Figure 8.2 Chain ferry advertisement for TSS

The final conceptual conclusion is The Swanage School, which represents the living educational theory ES have created. The school's strap-line is 'expanding horizons'; these words symbolise our ambition to create a distinctive experience of learning that encourages young people to have a global outlook in an ever-changing world. Bearing in mind Swanage is situated on a peninsula, where insularity is an issue, it was important for us to encourage young people to expand their horizons and to think globally. However, as one of the participants at the validation group meeting pointed out, 'you don't have to go to the horizon to expand it'. This perspective resonates with our aim for the school to enable young people to unearth the treasure which is deep within them, rather than on an unobtainable, distant horizon. Moreover, our situation in Swanage is a wonderful location to start digging, as Figure 8.2 suggests the landscape, geology, heritage and geography of the Isle of Purbeck is a classroom in itself.

Needless to say such lofty ambitions do not come easily, and TSS is still to prove itself as an outstanding school. However, that does not prevent us from continuing to travel in a hopeful direction as we create an imagined future for children. In the process of creating this school we have re-written the narrative that was presented to us in 2009, when DCC began their review. Morris stated that 'education is committed to the view that the ideal order and the actual order can ultimately be made one' (Morris, 1925) and this thesis is an explanation of how our values influenced the transformation of an 'ideal' into an 'actual' reality, as we re-wrote the story. Between 2009 and 2013 ES struggled to find the balance between what was ideal and what could be made actual. At times our values were in contradiction within and outside the group, which made turning ideals into actuality difficult. However, a balance was found and in so doing we

have made a contribution to knowledge; TSS will be the first human-scale free school in the UK. This explanation of how the school was founded acts as a testimony to our practice as we lived out our values. Our vision was to create a learning environment to enhance the quality of life for the whole community. Although this may have seemed a pious ambition, particularly in light of the criticism we faced, it is a genuine reflection of how values influenced the group.

The success of our approach relied on establishing a local, viable small school with three important values-based factors. First, place: the importance of teaching children the value of the location in which they live, in this case the first UNESCO natural World Heritage site; The Jurassic Coast. For example, our aim was for students to seek artistic, sporting and creative inspiration from the locality, such as learning about growing their own food and being part of a resilient community. Second, principles; our aim was for values to act as standards of judgement on the success of the school, from the quality of relationships and how well the students are known to how statistical data is used to make a real difference to learning and to considering the school's role in and on behalf of the community and wider world. Third, purposefulness: the aim was for families and local people to work together to enable students to become agents of change in their own community and beyond. The intention was for there to be a sense of purpose about learning, and in the manner in which staff and students engage in the learning environment.

As a community group, ES believed that children should be educated locally, within their own neighbourhood. Our ambition was for the school to be attractive to local parents and students because it would focus on the individual whilst forming an essential and dynamic part of the wider community in which they lived. An extract from the original free school proposal to the DfE summarised the vision:

This is an opportunity to do something very special; we want to create an exemplar school, including the building of links with higher education institutions and schools across the UK and abroad. It will be a school where a world-class education combining traditional and innovative learning goes hand-in-hand with research at the forefront of teaching. (The Swanage School Free School proposal, 2010)

In order to succeed TSS needs to model the intrinsic values that ES shared in practice. These values act as standards of judgement of the school's success. Therefore it is necessary for me, at this conclusive stage of my research, to re-imagine how TSS will be a living example and explanation of the values of those who founded it.

The key values of the primacy of relationships, genuine community engagement, social responsibility and environmental sustainability underpin the school to ensure that every member of the learning community is valued and encouraged to fulfil their potential. The aspiration is for students to be happy to attend the school and have a fondness for the time they spend there. The desire is for them to feel nurtured and encouraged by a community of staff who 'hold' the students' best interests at the centre of the life of the school. The links between school and community need to be strong and each student needs to feel that they are a valued, respected, member of the locality in which they live; being supported by, and giving support to, the development of a society that is caring, nurturing and seeks the well-being of all, regardless of background.

ES was initiated and exists with such an imagined future in mind. The intention was to found a learning community where high aspirations are nurtured in order for young people to 'turn aside' to the 'brightness' that awaits them. The values held by ES had an affective influence in shaping policy and practice in the locality of Swanage so that our young people will be able to look back fondly on their education and, without 'hurrying on to a receding future, nor hankering after an imagined past' (Thomas, 1975), take what they have learnt into their adult lives, to discover 'the eternity' that awaits them; the realisation of their own dreams, aspirations and ambitions.

However, this is a utopian educational ideal and the vision may fall short of the reality. The rhetoric of an imagined ideal school may be a dream beyond actuality. Enabling values to be influential in a human-scale school context is still challenging. Critics of the free school policy, such as Miller, have been at pains to point out that aspiring to such values is one thing, but putting them into practice is another (LSN, 2012). She has a point, despite these worthy principles there may still be a gap in terms of putting them into practice.

Moreover, an answer lies in how we define values and how these values are influential. Values can be ideals or can be seen as a reflection of how we feel about the way we live and how we want to change our lives. Values have an esoteric, sacred quality, yet at the same time they are practical tools, standards of judgment, to act as criteria of success in our lives. If TSS can utilise its values, use them as standards to reflect on action, it will have an opportunity to realise its ambitions, rather than simply elevate them to a lofty but impractical pedestal. Tracing the journey from contradiction to change is an important part of such reflection, of making progress and improving.

There is consensus within ES that values are not merely conceptual but are practical; they provide standards and measures for action and self-expression within praxis. For example, if the intrinsic value of respect is a measure of the standard of dialogue then reflection on how we conduct meetings could result in fewer disagreements in committees. If we define sustainability as living simply and sharing resources then reflection on how we create a school that is a hub of community engagement, a community cafe and a centre of lifelong learning will be examples of putting this value into practice. If we understand democracy to be a measure of the balance of men and women in our active membership and a standard by which we judge who should speak in public on behalf of the group, then reflection on this will lead to a wider audience being engaged as role models for the next generation. Enacting the influence of intrinsic values, releasing their potency through action, is what makes their role so central to our lives; it is about what we do, not just what we espouse.

## **Summary**

The work of ES is not flawless, but it is influential. There are others watching our journey who want to find ways to live in accordance with intrinsic values, in order to improve their communities. Therefore, the overall conceptual conclusion of this chapter is that TSS as a living theory is an explanation of how humans can be transformative as an educational influence upon themselves, others and the wider community. We have committed ourselves to ‘the vision quest of generating new theories that communicate the lived experience of the present moment’ (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.40);

This is a commitment to learning, embracing the unknown future and accepting that the present is all we have. What we do with the present creates all our futures. This is an open ended, accepted form of life, a commitment to risk, but which has untold rewards. (p.40)

In this chapter I have demonstrated how conceptual insights are related to the foundation of TSS and the influence of values within practice. The final chapter concludes the account of my research in order to 'tie up the ends from where I started' (Trafford and Leshem, 2008, p.128). The aim is to trace my conclusions back through the previous chapters in order to justify my claims to knowledge. Most importantly, the research question is answered.

## **CHAPTER NINE - CONCLUSIONS**

### **Introduction**

This final chapter brings the research journey full circle, linking the beginning to the end. It answers the question, provides conclusions and explains how the research makes a contribution to knowledge. This justifies how new understanding has been created, by using original insight from the work of others in relation to the topic being studied. Additionally, the chapter serves as a reminder of what has gone before, by identifying the topic, why it was chosen and what the research sought to discover. It tells of the findings, in factual, interpretive and conceptual forms. The research methodology and design are critiqued and conclusions are presented as coherent arguments, supported with evidence from the findings.

Finally, this chapter is a self-critique of this learning journey. I examine my approach and consider how the investigation might have been conducted in a different way; the aim of such reflection is to identify an agenda for further post-doctoral study, which arises from this research.

### **A reminder of the journey**

The topic for this research was values and how they influenced practice in the context of founding a free school in Swanage, Dorset. The reason this topic was chosen was because of my involvement in the proposer group, Education Swanage. As Vice-Chair, with the responsibility for presenting the curriculum and organisation of learning of the proposed school to the DfE, I was interested in how values influenced the work we were immersed in.

The methodology used was a form of action research, living theory, devised by Jack Whitehead in the 1970s. Using an inductive and inventive approach I drew on previous research into the conceptualisation of values and literature on the concept of the sacred, as well as insights from practical theology and human-scale education to design the research, so that as well as examining how values influenced our work, I could also make links to concepts and theories beyond the scope of living theory. At the start of the journey the practical theology dimension of the methodology was uncertain, particularly as I was not working in a traditionally religious or theological context. I struggled with how the context of my research could be a platform for practical theology. Yet as I

followed different ‘forks in the road’ I developed a personal understanding of myself as a practical theologian, particularly with reference to the work of Ganzevoort (2009). This reflection helped to answer the research question and provided a methodological framework that was not set in stone, but allowed me to take an innovative path.

The paradigm the research was set in was ‘praxis’, which is appropriate to this professional doctorate study. The research design was iterative, based on a conceptual framework that embraced three key concepts; listening to key voices, a reflection cycle and development of factual, interpretive and conceptual conclusions. The research reflected on theory and practice and from it a new contribution to knowledge emerged.

### **How did values influence the work of ES in founding The Swanage School?**

The research question was explored through the findings of the data collected, via interviews and an online survey. Factual and interpretive discussions were developed, which were affirmed by a validation group. The key findings were that values were identified as being influential because, when they ‘rubbed up against each other’ in situations of conflict and contradiction, they initiated a process of transitional change through the instigation of conversation which led to congruence. This interaction often occurred when there was conflict and contradiction, for example, between extrinsic (self-enhancing) and intrinsic (self-transcending) values. Furthermore, intrinsic values were identified as being particularly significant when they were influential on the development of the shared, aspirational value that the participants held as the main aim of the project, in this case the realisation of the school. Therefore, the answer to the research question is that intrinsic values positively influenced the work of ES in founding The Swanage School by effecting transformational change. This was evidenced by values being knowledge creating (epistemological) and energy flowing (ontological) dimensions of our lives, which were central in evoking awe and passion, in other words they had a ‘sacred’ quality. Values such as these influenced our knowing and being in the world and prompted us to act and find meaning in our work at an everyday and aspirational level.

In a sense members of ES became ‘alchemists’ (Torbert, Rooke and Fisher, 2003, p.167), capable of aligning their espoused values of integrity and mutuality with their actual intentions and behaviours, by engaging in action inquiry that asked; how are my

actions aligned to my values? On an individual level, independent of the intentions of the group, each person may not have been likely to operate at the ‘alchemist’ level, however, once in an organisation focused on a common cause, with the purpose of transformation in mind, the self transcending, intrinsic values have more influence, within an action inquiry context.

From a conceptual perspective, this form of action inquiry forms a ‘sacred’ dimension whereby values influenced the operational work of ES, by enabling what was espoused and what was enacted to be aligned. Thus, creative patterns were embedded in meaning and action, grounded in strong relationships, within our liminal situation. The influence of values in this context enabled a process of reflection on contradiction, whereby transformation occurred by moving from conflict, to conversation, and thus resulted in congruence. Therefore, the conclusion of this investigation is that values are living, educational, action-based influences in learning and explanatory principles in creating transformational change, within our personal identity, in our relationships with others and in community. In the context of the research, values acted as standards of judgement for practice and in turn created a living educational theory, in this case the work of ES and TSS.

### **Contribution to knowledge**

The Swanage School is the first human-scale free school in the UK, therefore there is no previous research or evidence that explains how such a school might be established. This research is a contribution to knowledge in that it explains, through analysis and synthesis of factual, interpretive and conceptual conclusions, how values have influenced its founding. This claim to knowledge is justified by the evidence presented in this thesis which supports the work of ES and the founding of TSS as a living educational theory. It is an account of the explanatory principles that had an educational influence on the founding of the school. The story emerged from methodological inventiveness as I have used the work of others in an original way, specifically from the theoretical perspectives that delimited this research, including existing literature on the conceptualisation of values and the sacred, living theory, practical theology and human-scale education.



During the research I came to consider the influence of values in a new way, as a 'trace of the sacred'. Others may disagree with this interpretation; however my argument is based on research evidence that demonstrates how values, particularly intrinsic values, create a gravitational pull by evoking awe and passion in our lives. The patterns of influence that values create, when they respond to situations of conflict and contradiction, result in a process of change that is possible through critical conversation. Time and again these patterns emerged as the members of ES narrated examples of stories where contradictions have been resolved through the influence of values-based action inquiry.

Viewing values from a theological perspective has validated my work and enabled me to analyse and synthesise my findings and reflections. The contribution to knowledge is an assimilation of my understanding of practice and the experience of fellow practitioners, in order to create new meaning and understanding in the form of a living educational theory. Together we have discovered the ways in which values were influential on the work of ES in founding The Swanage School.

## **Reflections**

Being a member of ES has been a privilege and through it I have found purpose and meaning, not merely in my professional life, but personally. The experience has enabled me to develop as a person, to reflect on my strengths and weaknesses and build relationships that are deeper than I had previously known (see page 127). The opportunity to focus my doctorate on the work of ES and the founding of the school has enabled me to find a depth of meaning in my life and in our shared experience that helps justify the exhaustive process we have been through.

I have learnt a lot about myself that I did not previously know. I have learnt about my colleagues and relationships that I would never have known. We have shared an unusual, creative and demanding experience that will remain in our memories for the rest of our lives. I hope that the legacy of our work will provide a caring, nurturing, learning environment for the children, young people and community of Swanage for a long time to come. The values that have influenced our journey are a fundamental part of the story and I have enjoyed the challenge of capturing the spirit of how they led us

‘out of darkness into a marvellous light’, to quote my grandfather, based on a now famous quote that he had on display in his house in Wales when I was a child;

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, “give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown”, and he replied, “Go into the darkness, and put your hand in to the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.  
(Haskins, 1940, personal memento)

What has been unearthed for me is a reawakening, a reigniting, of a spiritual dimension that was almost lost; not a passive, meditative kind of spirituality, but an encounter with the sacred that evokes passion in me and leads me on a path ‘into the unknown’ to take positive action, this time with a sense of awareness that provides light for each fork in the road.

What has been unearthed for ES as a community is the realisation of a dream in the shape of the founding of the school.



Figure 9.1 The Swanage School logo and motto

The Swanage School motto is ‘omnia vinces perseverando’, which means ‘perseverance conquers all’. This is meaningful to all members of ES and has added poignancy for me as a candidate for the professional doctorate. For the last five years our work has required perseverance; an intrinsic, self-transcending value that was certainly an influence on our journey.

If I reflect back to the start, before I took the first step, I have wondered what I might have done differently. Had I chosen another paradigm, perhaps taken a more positivistic approach, the outcome of the research would have been different, less purposeful. I

could have studied the influence of values in a more objective way, but this would have lacked the importance of subjectivity that action research brings. I could have taken a more traditional critical theory approach, but this would have been less relevant to studying the influence of values as living explanations of practice. Living theory, practical theology and human-scale education have enabled me to find my own way to develop this research, in a paradigm of praxis in which I was immersed, and moreover have given me a voice, to explain and justify the work ES have carried out in creating The Swanage School.

### **I have seen the sun break through to illuminate a small field...**

In that small field in Swanage, where the middle school closed, the diggers and builders unearthed the foundations of the new school, perhaps some alchemy has taken place. That field was indeed the one that had the golden treasure in it. The treasure takes the form of what ES describe as a 'little gem of a school'. It will be the first of its kind, a purpose-built, government-funded free school with a human-scale ethos, as the story evolves it will be 'captured' in the narratives of the lives of those who share experiences there.

This is not the end of my journey as a researcher, but really just the beginning. Pattison (2004, p.203) urges researchers of 'all kinds' to become more involved in 'finding out more about how values are involved and function in different professions and professional contexts' and it is my hope that this research and thesis will contribute in a modest way to the discourse on the influence of values. Within the context of the research this exploration has opened up a new agenda for us to investigate, a new 'fork in the road'. TSS is hoping to engage in a collaborative programme of research to build evidence of human-scale best practice. This will involve collecting evidence of good practice; for example, the impact of restructuring into smaller learning communities with depth of relationships at their core. This practice will be explored in relation to the influence of key values, for example, relationships, integrity and respect for the individual, inclusion, collaboration, community and social justice. The intention is for TSS to be a centre for inductive research using narrative approaches and collaborative, action inquiry. The aim will be to capture the story of the students and staff and to collect evidence of best practice that reflects how the core purposes and values of the school are lived out.

Moreover, from a personal point of view, having conducted my doctoral research, I hope to share my experiences, knowledge and skills in a collaborative and inquiring process, to help others work more effectively as educational practitioners in the new context in which I am now working. In January 2014 I was appointed as Partnerships Manager in the South Coast, for the educational charity Teach First. The vision of the charity is that ‘no child’s education should be limited by their socio-economic background’ and as an organisation we are building a movement of teachers as leaders to affect change by eradicating educational disadvantage between children from poor families and their more affluent counterparts. With this in mind, I intend to take the conclusions from my doctoral research forward by considering how, within the values-based world of Teach First, we can encourage employees to be alchemists. This new endeavour is not only about how our values influence the balancing of our vision with the many factors that affect educational disadvantage, it is also about how the ‘jousting’ of complex situations and interactions in communities can develop the understanding we have of our values and the part they play in how we live.

However, the journey of the alchemist across the metaphorical tightrope should not to be held too tightly. One should allow the tension of the rope to take the weight, to allow the complexity of contradictions within our lives to be involved in a moment to moment walk (or even dance) that is an authentic experience of the balancing act of living. In fact, values need to be held loosely, in order to hold the balance. The uncomfortable quality of the contradictions that we experience as we live our lives may seem at odds with the world, but it is when we acknowledge the challenge of living with and holding our values in such contradiction, that we create alchemy in the way we interact and transform ourselves, our relationships and the communities in which we live.

In the introduction to this thesis I said ‘I hope that the manner in which our values, as standards of judgement, are lived out in the telling of this story is a testimony to the authenticity of the journey so that other people can learn from it’. At the end of the journey that is still my hope; that others will be able to learn from this story and take a step out into the unknown to unearth the influence of values and trace a sacred path in their own lives, relationships and communities.

In conclusion, the sacred dimension to our lives is not dualistically set apart from the 'profane', but rather it is an integral part of the here and now, the 'sacroscape' in which we live. From my perspective, there is not a transcendent realm set apart from a secular realm, but an everyday space which interacts with the sacred in the intertwining of the influence of values and subsequent action. The 'everyday-ness' of our values, influences the actions we take, both in terms of our self enhancement as individuals but also as we transcend our individuality to take action as a community. Whereas our extrinsic, self enhancing values might well promote our individual status, it is the intrinsic, self-transcending values that hold the sacred quality, in finding congruence in the day-to-day contradictory interactions of our lives.

If I have faith in anything at all, it is in the capacity for humans to value each other and 'hold the balance' in the communities in which they live to the extent that they influence positive transformation, as if this world is the last one. This is a sacred process.

'There is no better world beyond this one, no other order of things elsewhere to be aspired after. So there is nothing left for religion to be except a complete and whole hearted commitment to this world which is the last world' (Cupitt, 2000, p.94).

Image removed to protect personal identity.

Figure 9.2 The Swanage School opens 4th September 2013



Figure 9.3 TSS governors at the official opening 16<sup>th</sup> May 2014



Figure 9.4 'From unearthing values to building foundations' - TSS under construction  
September 2013

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix One – Email Correspondence with Ruurd Ganzevoort

## Appendix Two – Paper One

## Appendix Three – Paper Two

## Appendix Four – Paper Three

## Appendix Five – Timeline and journey of ES



## Appendix Six – Forecast Distribution of 11-16 Population

## Appendix Seven – Ethical Consent Letter and Participant Information Sheet

## Appendix Eight – Semi-Structured Interview Questions

## Appendix Nine – Online Survey

## Appendix Ten – Prezi Presentation to Validation Group

## Appendix Eleven – The ES Rainbow

## Appendix Twelve – Email Correspondence From ES Validation Group